CRASH

ZX SPEC

A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
No. 37 FEBRUARY 1987
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CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

ISSUE No. 37 February 1987

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Roger Kean, Oliver Frey, Franco Frey
Publishing Executive/Editor
Graeme Kidd
Sub Editor
Ciaran Brennan
Staff Writers
Lloyd Mangram, Lee Paddon, Hannah Smith
Adventure Editor
Derek Brewster
Strategy Editor
Philippa Irving
Tech Tipster
Simon Goodwin
Contributing Writers
Jon Bates, Brendon Kavanagh, John Minson
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David Western
Art Director
Dick Shiner
Assistant Art Director
Gordon Druce
Illustrators
Ian Craig, Oliver Frey
Production
Seb Clare, Tim Croton, Mark Kendrick, Tony Lorton, Nick Orchard, Michael Parkinson, Cameron Pound, Jonathan Rignall, Matthew Uffindell
Advertisement Manager
Roger Bennett
Advertisement Assistant
Nick Wild
Subscriptions
Denise Roberts
Mail Order
Carol Kinsey

Editorial and Production
1/2 King Street, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1AQ
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Mail Order and Subscriptions
PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB
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FEATURES

DIY

REGULARS

The second date for that nice new 1987 Diary: 26th February. That's when the March CRASH goes on sale . . .

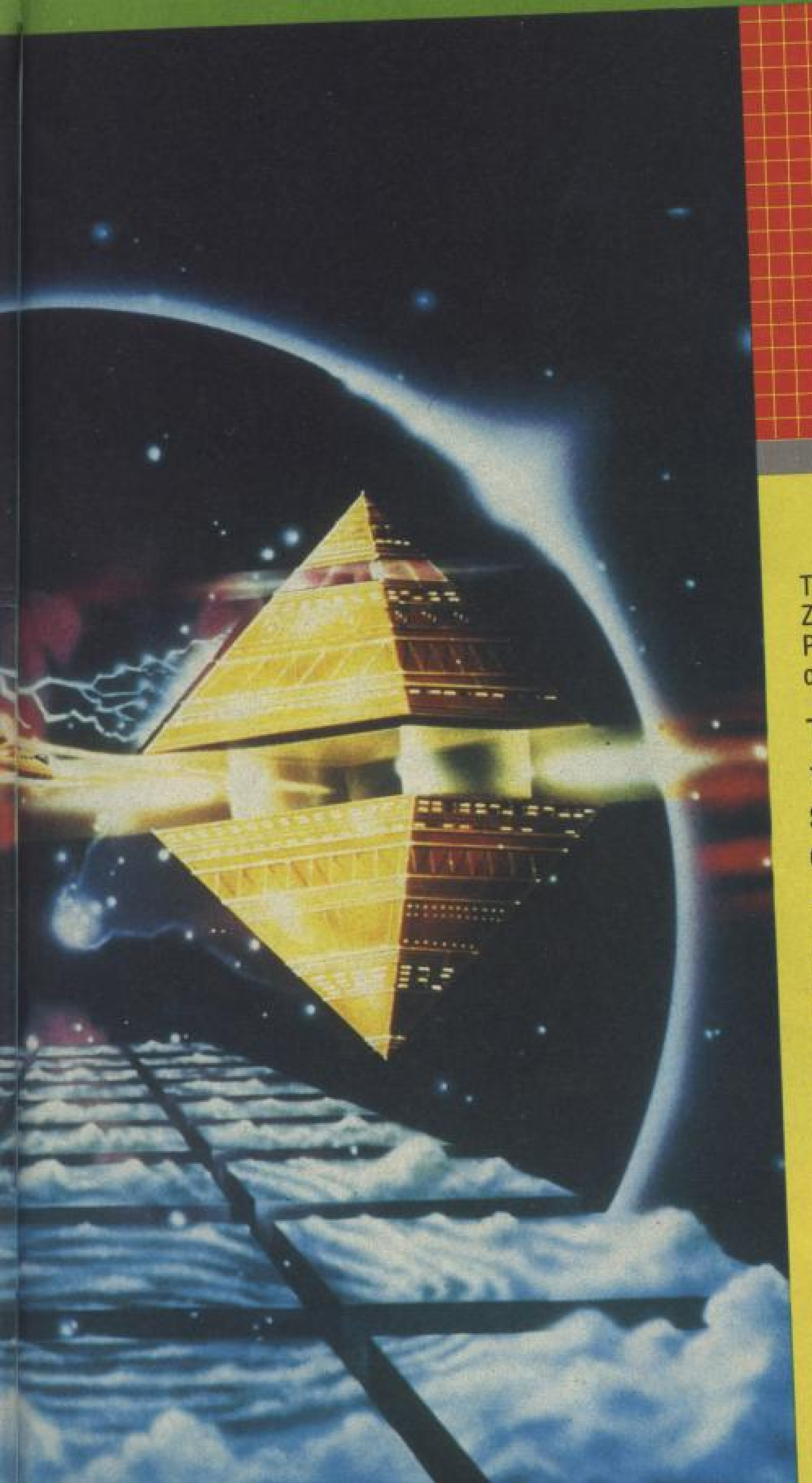
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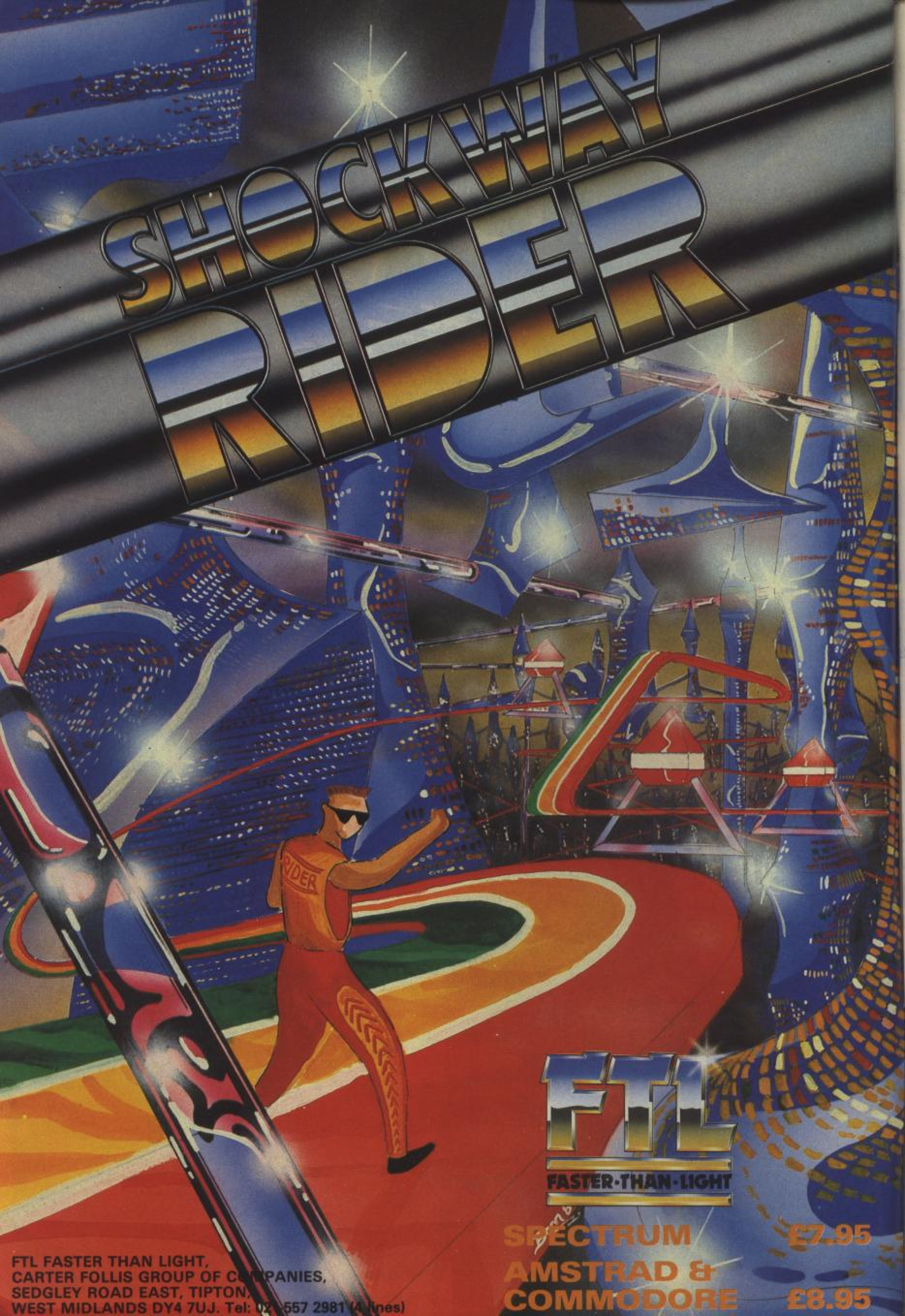
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CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM



Judging by the majority of the reviews in this issue, the first of 1987, this year is going to be dominated by film tie-ins and licensed versions of arcade games. Or maybe the industry is getting all the tie-ins out of the way nice and early so the rest of the year can be left free for the original games, based on original ideas and involving original concepts – we'll see.

We've had plenty of games in for review for this issue, but very few of them have been outstanding. The long-awaited licensed version of *Gauntlet* has lived up to expectations, and the other Smash this month is a film tie-in. But the bulk of the 'official' versions, tie-ins and sequels has proved to be disappointing. Maybe software houses are becoming too dependent on the power of the name on the outside of the box, and are starting to pay less attention to the game on the cassette inside. Alternatively, the cost of buying licences may be taking an unreasonable share of the budget available for producing games, leaving insufficient money in the kitty to spend on the game itself.

A disturbing trend.

More positively, it looks as if playing computer games could become a sociable activity this year. *Trivial Pursuit* has no doubt seen whole families grouped around the computer screen over the festive season, and the two-player game has come back into vogue. Indeed, to get the best out of *Gauntlet* and *Top Gun*, you really need to play with a friend . . .

Joining forces with a friend to play *Gauntlet* or going head-to-head (as opposed to taking it in turns) in a game adds to the fun – after all, computer-controlled opponents don't communicate with you, and playing games on your own can get lonely . . .

Graeme Kidd

A NEW RATINGS SYSTEM

This month sees the first major change in the CRASH reviewing system to be made for a long while. The most obvious change of all is probably the introduction of 'signed' reviews – at the moment we have three regular game testers and from now on Ben, Paul and Mike will be adding their names to their comments.

Lloyd has been receiving regular appeals in his postbag for our reviewers to make themselves known, and we have decided to bow to the weight of opinion (influenced just a little bit by Ben, Paul and Mike who were getting a bit tired of remaining anonymous). A glance at page 14 of this Issue should provide you with some background information . . .

Identifying the reviewers should help you make judgements about the validity of their criticisms – you may decide that one reviewer shares your tastes more closely than the others, and consequently give more weight to his opinions. Alternatively, you might detect that one member of our reviewing team doesn't like platform games, for instance, and bear this factor in mind when reading his opinions on the latest platform game.

The COMMENTS section of the reviews has also undergone a slight modification.

In the early days, when joystick interfaces were comparitively new, most Spectrum owners were very concerned how a game responded to the keyboard. Nowadays the keyboard response is less important as most games achieve a similarly high standard of keyboard control. We've opted to drop **Keyboard play** entirely.

Developments have overtaken a couple of the percentage ratings as well.

Originally, **Use of Computer** was used to evaluate how easy it was to use the computer to play a game, taking into account the positions of the control keys (in the historic days when definable key options weren't invented!) and the range of joystick options (when there were lots of different interfaces all competing to become the 'standard').

Getting Started was created as a rating to quantify how clear the instructions on the use of the controls were, and took into account how well the objectives of the game were described. Packaging and loading also came into a game's **Getting Started** rating.

After much discussion, we've decided to drop **Getting Started** and **Use of Computer** and introduce a new rating: **Presentation**. **Presentation** takes into account most of the elements of the two ratings it replaces and is intended to cover sound, as well as the range of options presented to the player, the packaging, instructions and to some extent, the scenario – in fact, anything not involved in the actual game itself.

To recap on the remaining ratings: **Graphics** is self-explanatory; **Playability** gauges the amount of fun to be had actually playing a game, while **Addictive qualities** indicates how long you want to play the game and how often you'll want to come back and have another go; **Value for money** should be obvious; and finally, in the **Overall** rating we take into account all the other ratings before coming up with the final analysis – which isn't arrived at by taking an average of the other five percentage ratings. **Addictive qualities**, **Playability**, and **Value for money** carry more weight than **Presentation** and **Graphics**, which are, after all, the gloss on the game you pay to play.

Let us know how far you agree with these changes . . .

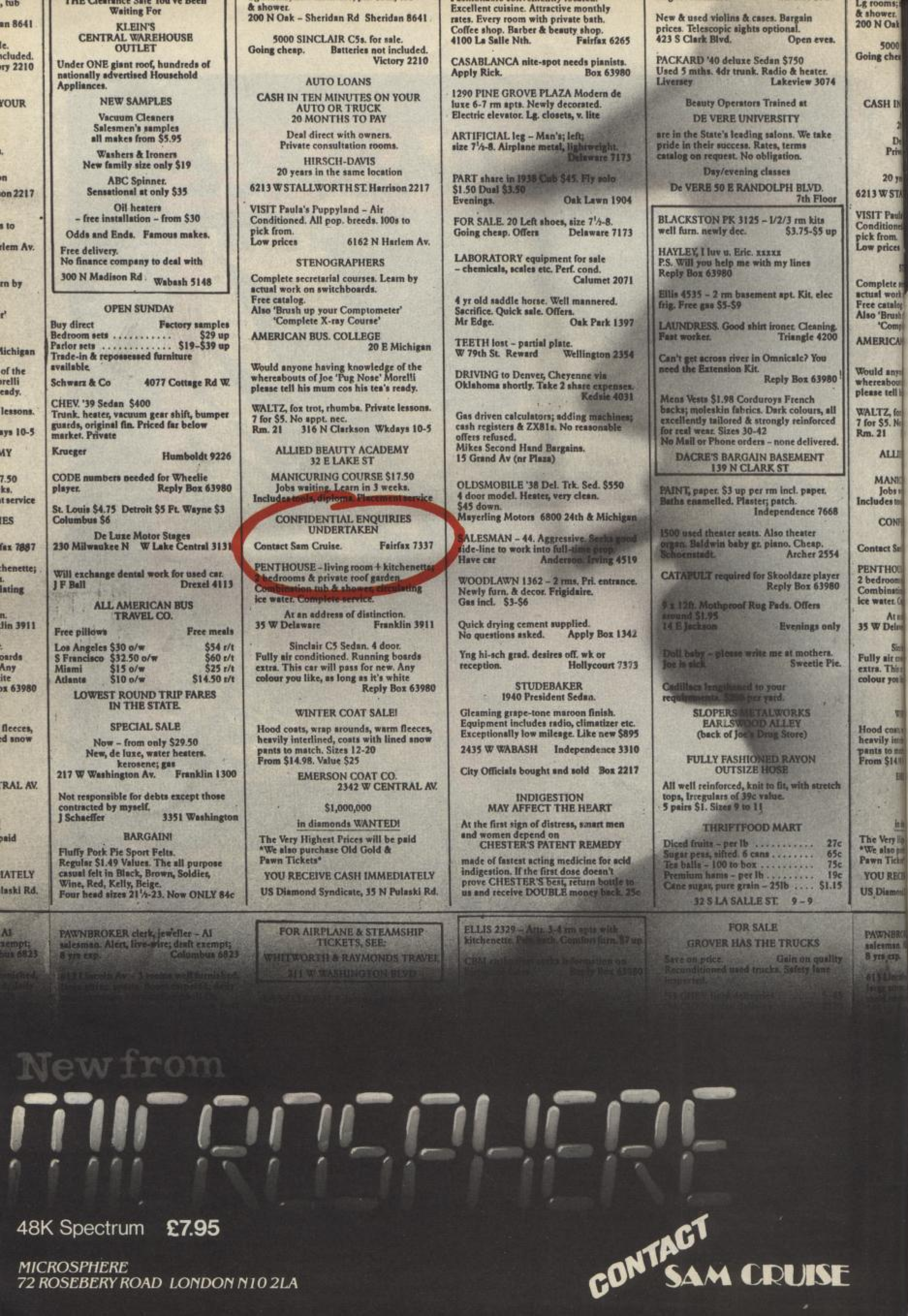
Use of computer	**71%**
Graphics	**84%**
Playability	**83%**
Getting started	**83%**
Addictive qualities	**69%**
Value for money	**75%**
Overall	**78%**

Presentation	93%
Graphics	82%
Playability	81%
Addictive qualities	79%
Value for money	80%
Overall	**82%**

INDEX TO GAMES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

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KERRASH!



A rare photo of the Doc Martened One in full dinner dress, as he prepares to announce the winners of the NEWSFIELD Awards △

▽ *Paula Byrne from RAINBIRD is pleased to collect the certificate naming STARGLIDER 128 as the best Spectrum game produced in 1986*





A charity auction in aid of the NSPCC ended the evening – the Auctioneer's Assistant holds up an Oli Original which was eventually knocked down for over £1200 in aid of battered children △

HANDING OUT ACCLAIM

Christmas is traditionally the time of year for gong-giving and general back-slapping. The CRASH staff put their heads together with the Spiky-Haired ones from ZZAP! and the motley crew from AMTIX!, and between them they came up with a list of companies and games that everyone agreed deserved recognition in the NEWSFIELD Awards for 1986. Just before Christmas our Publishing Executive put on his dress Doc Martens and handed out tastefully framed certificates at the Industry Dinner held in London's Hilton Hotel.

On the Spectrum front, the award for Best Game of 1986 went to *Starglider 128* from **RAINBIRD**. *Cobra* from **OCEAN** took the Best Platform Game award, while **MARTECH**'s *Zoids* was selected as Best Strategy Game.

Uridium from **HEWSON** received the award for Best Shoot 'em Up, but mainly on account of the much improved new Commodore version. *World Games* from **OCEAN** was voted best sports simulation by the staff of our three magazines, and it should be appearing on the Spectrum in due course. So should *The Pawn* from **RAINBIRD**, which collected the prize for Best Graphics.

So much for the opinions of the staff here at **NEWSFIELD**. It'll be interesting to compare our opinions with the results of the Readers' Awards.

EXTRA TRIVIA

To follow up their highly successful *Trivial Pursuit*, **DOMARK** have released the first in their promised series of additional question sets.

Trivial Pursuit, Young Players Edition comes in two forms: as a game in its own right at £14.95, and as a tape holding an extra 6,000 questions to be used with the original *Genus Edition* at £7.95. The questions cover topics ranging from Grange Hill to The Wizard of Oz and should provide youngsters with a chance to run rings around the older generation, who's knowledge of *Duran Duran* and *Ah–Ha* might be a bit rusty.

Further versions are in the pipeline. The *Baby Boomer* version, due out by Easter, is for closet hippies born in the years of the post-war baby boom. These are the people who've still got their Kaftan hidden in the bottom of the wardrobe and believe flares will make a comeback. *Genus II* should appear around next Christmas, providing Trivia lovers with another 6,000 general knowledge questions.

COMPILATION CORNER

Another crop of compilations has been gathered in. *Five Star* from **BEAU JOLLY** contains a quintet of games, all of which collected high ratings in CRASH: *Zoids* from **MARTECH**, *Equinox* and *Three Weeks in Paradise* from **MIKRO-GEN**, *Back To Skool* from **MICROSPHERE** and *Spindizzy* from **ELECTRIC DREAMS**. The whole lot, two cassettes, inlay and entry to a competition costs £9.95.

ULTIMATE fans won't want to miss two £9.99 *Unbelievable Ultimate* compilations released by **US GOLD**. One tape includes *Atic Atac, SabreWulf, Underwurlde* and *Alien 8* – the other contains four golden oldies *Jetpac, Tranzam, Lunar Jetman and Psst.* Scott Adams fans might want to pick up a previously unreleased adventure from The Master – *Buckaroo Bonzai* – which appears on the *Scott Adams Scoops* collection with *Voodoo Castle, Strange Odyssey* and *Pirate Adventure.* Then there's the *Spectrum Stingers* pack, also from **US GOLD** which features *Bruce Lee, Pole Position, Zorro* and *Cyberun*, priced at £9.99.

GAUNTLET GOOF

Gauntlet, **US GOLD**'s Smash arcade conversion, may present problems when it comes to loading the dungeons into your Spectrum.

There are two editions of the game in circulation. The first edition has a black-coloured inlay. This version will *NOT* work with the new Spectrum Plus Two, and there may also be problems when using a Kempston joystick interface. If you experience either of these problems, take the tape back to the shop you purchased it from, and exchange it for a copy with a buff coloured inlay, which is a later version with these bugs cleared up.

A spokesman for **US GOLD** said the company would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused. Apparently, quite a few problems have been encountered when getting versions of the company's games to run on the Plus Two – the machine appears less tolerant to some forms of piracy protection and fast loaders than the earlier types of Spectrum.

Thanks must go to P Margetson, who contacted CRASH by Micronet on our MBX number (105845851) to inform us of this problem.



Demolition is the sincerest form of criticism. We sent the Ludlow Mafia 'hit' squad to CRL's HQ recently to try to extract a copy of the long awaited Cyborg. No? Okay, so CRL sent us this picture to emphasise the fact that a new game called BallBreaker is on its way . . . ▷

N·E·W·S



Jonathon Eggelton, designer of the Genesis game KAT TRAP, demonstrates the finished product to John Rowlands, the software buyer for WH SMITHS. Mark Strachan from DOMARK looks on, nervously awaiting the verdict.

Owing to their extensive chain of retail outlets, SMITHS decision to stock a game can have a dramatic effect on its sales. According to Mark Strachan, KAT TRAP had already clocked up over 15,000 sales before 1987 began!



A tricky one for the insurance man. Does a flying shark crash landing through your roof qualify as an Act of God or Natural Shrinkage? VIRGIN GAMES's mascot, The Laughing Shark, has had a nasty accident. Probably lost control in flight laughing at one of super-sub Ciaran Brennan's brilliant jokes . . . (no prizes for guessing who wrote this – ED)

NEW ARRIVALS

Two new companies have decided to set sail on the stormy waters of the games software market. VONSOFT somewhat optimistically hope to capture five to ten per cent of the market, with twenty releases in the first four months of this year.

This assault will start with *A.R.E.N.A.*, a graphic adventure selling for £4.95. According to VONSOFT, buying the game will entitle you to enter a competition for a prize worth at least £10,000. Later in the year, they plan to launch separate labels specialising in utilities and adventures.

ALTERNATIVE SOFTWARE is another new company which plans to concentrate on the budget market, releasing games at £1.99 – *Howzat* and *Henry's Hoard* are the first two on the release schedule. Products are also in preparation for a utilities label – SUMMIT SOFTWARE – which should kick off with a £9.95 art package called *Art Master*

Fear & Loathing



SOAKING WET – INSIDE AND OUT

It's the week before Christmas as I write this, and I haven't bought any cards yet, let alone sent them. The reason is simple. Instead I bought a flat, and with it came all the joys of home ownership, such as holes in the roof. So this column isn't about computers . . . it's about DIY!

I was thinking about the kitchen on the day of the CDS launch for *Brian Clough's Football Fortunes* held at Wembley. Do you know how difficult it is to find plain black and white floor tiles? And as I walked up the ramp to the imposing stadium, golden in the winter sun, I wondered if they had plumbing problems too!

I was only an hour late for the reception and the first person I met was Cloughie himself. 'What's the matter,' he quipped, 'miss the team coach from London?' But before I could think of a suitably witty response, I noticed the row of BBCs.

'What's this,' I asked **Dave Carlos**, as he ushered me to one of the computers, 'a convention for nearly-dead micros?' But no, it seems that the only completed version of the game was on the Beeb.

I confess that I was less than overjoyed at the thought of having to sample a season as a league team manager, there and then. After all, the black and white strip only reminded me of the kitchen tiles. But there was something intriguing about *Football Fortunes*. The computer takes care of the book-keeping while the players use cards, counters and a board.

It would take too long to describe the full rules, but the basic idea is to create a squad which can go for the double, trading for players with your opponents if need be, but without bankrupting yourself when payday comes round. I managed to top the league but went out in the cup, and so failed to win on management points.

I'll be interested to see how *Football Fortunes* does. I believe that it deserves to succeed. After my harangue in the last column about the lack of imagination in the software market, this can only be seen as a positive step. It's also fun, and lets a group of people share in a computer game.

You can tell how much I enjoyed the experience, because when the time came to eat, I insisted that we stay and finish the season. But the reward for being a manager is good food and good drink too, so when the time came for a tour of the stadium I politely declined.

From the Stadium window I'd seen a Do-It-Yourself store, and my mind wasn't on turf but vinyl tiles. And Wembley turned out to be a DIY Mecca as well as a sports one. I found them. Now all I needed was to get the cooker installed.

While I was pondering this particular problem, I received a phone call from **Roz Hubley**. 'Hi, John, we've not met but I'm handling PR for TIGRESS DESIGNS and **Beth Wooding** told me that you're a bit of a foodie. Would you like lunch?'

Well, I've been called a lot of things in my time, but my hedonistic over-consumption has never been called foodie-ism before. Still, when the invite is for Ken Lo's Memories of China, one of the best oriental restaurants in England, you don't quibble about terms, especially if you've not got a cooker.

Actually, I had another reason for accepting. I have a hell of a high regard for the TIGRESS games-designing team. And it seemed that they didn't have any particular product to push - they just wanted to rap. Good food and good conversation is a fine way to spend a day.

There was plenty of both, as Roz and I tackled such exotic dishes as drunken fish. Too much, again, to recount in one brief column, but part of that conversation revolved around my current obsession - what lies in store for software in '87.

TIGRESS, as far as I'm concerned, could be the future. They have the ability to originate new ideas, and ideas which should appeal to a broad range of ages. From the simplicity of *Think!* to the strategic complexities of *They Stole a Million*, and the brainbending arcade game, *Deactivators*, they avoid simple pigeon holes.

The secret of TIGRESS's success seems to be that they're not under pressure to produce so many games a month, like many a large company, but can spend time developing quality ideas which they can see through every stage of production.

Saturday the 13th, (doesn't have quite the same ring to it, does it?) provided a clash of attractions. While the morning was taken up with a ZX Microfair, DOMARK were also running the final of their *Trivial Pursuit* contest. Trivial Pursuit possesses that classic simplicity that makes a game addictive. And it transferred to the computer with amazing success.

But first I made the rounds of the seasonal jamboree in the Horticultural Hall, meeting old mates, avoiding enemies, and finally gravitating to the bar where a benevolent Mr Kidd poured a pint into me before we set off for DOMARK and The Brewery.

To be honest, they could have been launching *Cabbage Patch Dolls - The Game* at The Brewery and I'd have been there. That sort of an invite to a Minson is like a magnet to iron filings. But my corrupting influence spread to Graeme, and we rolled up an hour late.

This had its advantages though. We avoided being roped in to run one of the semi-finals in this championship play-off, and were able to scoff the nosh in peace, safe in the knowledge that the CRASH contestant couldn't lose – because the poor fellow had caught 'flu and couldn't make it!

Then upstairs to further stuff ourselves on Trivial Pursuit after dinner mints, complete with a question of no relevance whatsoever in every box (for example: Do too many Trivial Pursuit after dinner mints give you acne?)

Let's be honest, however much fun it is to play, Trivial Pursuit is unlikely to become a mass spectator sport. Graeme made an excuse about having to see a man about a Microfair and left early. But I hung on in there as the contestants battled to the finish, all under the eagle eyes of Johnny Ball as MC and Cuddly Dave, who seems to get everywhere these days, as adjudicator.

It all got quite tense as **John Cooke**, the eventual winner, failed to get his final wedge and had to take another run at the centre. And his reward for having a mind full of useless information? A solid gold Trivial Pursuit set, worth a cool ten grand. The beauty of the craftsmanship matched its value.

Meanwhile a battle of titanic proportions was taking place among the assembled press corps, most of whom had entered into the Christmas spirit a good week or two earlier and were now in a state of ecstasy. No, I'm not talking about the side-bets which were being placed on the championship, but the Hacks Award of a gold-plated set of TP playing pieces.

All that was required was to answer ten questions - but to make it harder they were from the Junior Edition. Well maybe the alcohol had taken its toll, or maybe most people hadn't drunk enough, because in the end the winner only needed nine correct answers to pick up his status symbol.

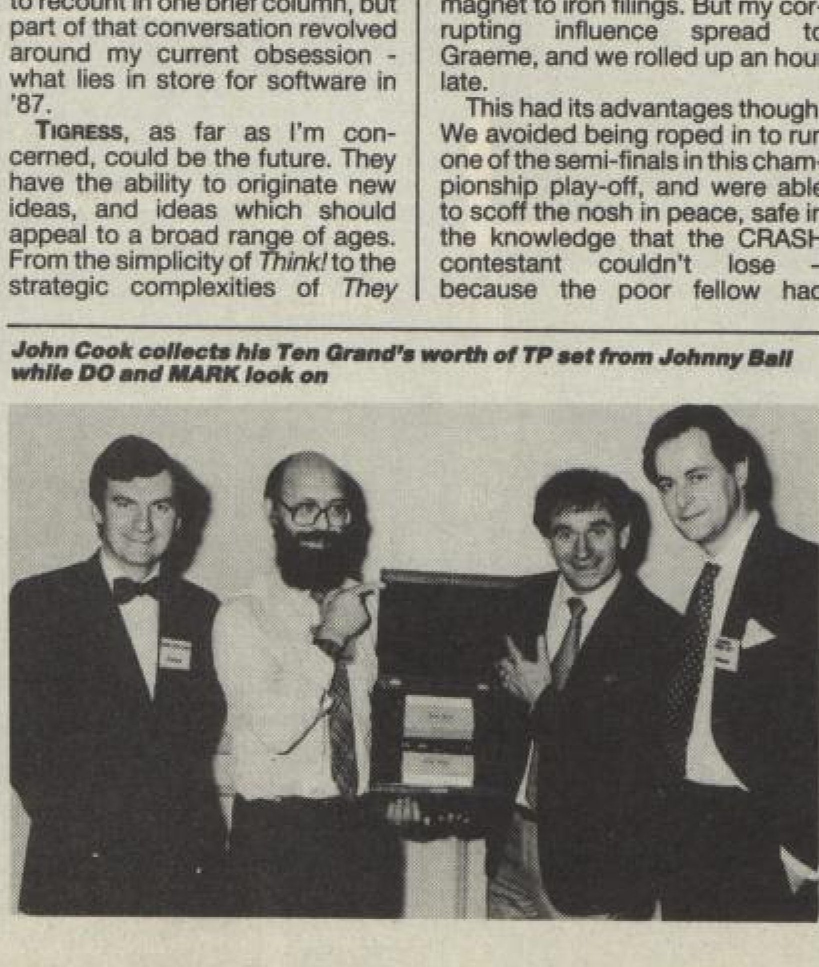
And who was it, you may ask? Well, who else has a mind so trivial and so childish? But where did I slip up? Well, just to set the record straight, I now know that Time and Relative Dimensions in Space is not better known as Einstein's Theory of Relativity!

So that's it! The last column written in 1986 starts off 1987 and I now own some satisfyingly heavy Trivial Pursuit pieces, though not a leak-proof roof. I'll probably seek sanctuary from my indoor shower at a Christmas Party or two . . . and maybe next month I'll get to tell you about them.

Yours in F&L

HUNTER S MINSON

John Cook collects his Ten Grand's worth of TP set from Johnny Ball while DO and MARK look on

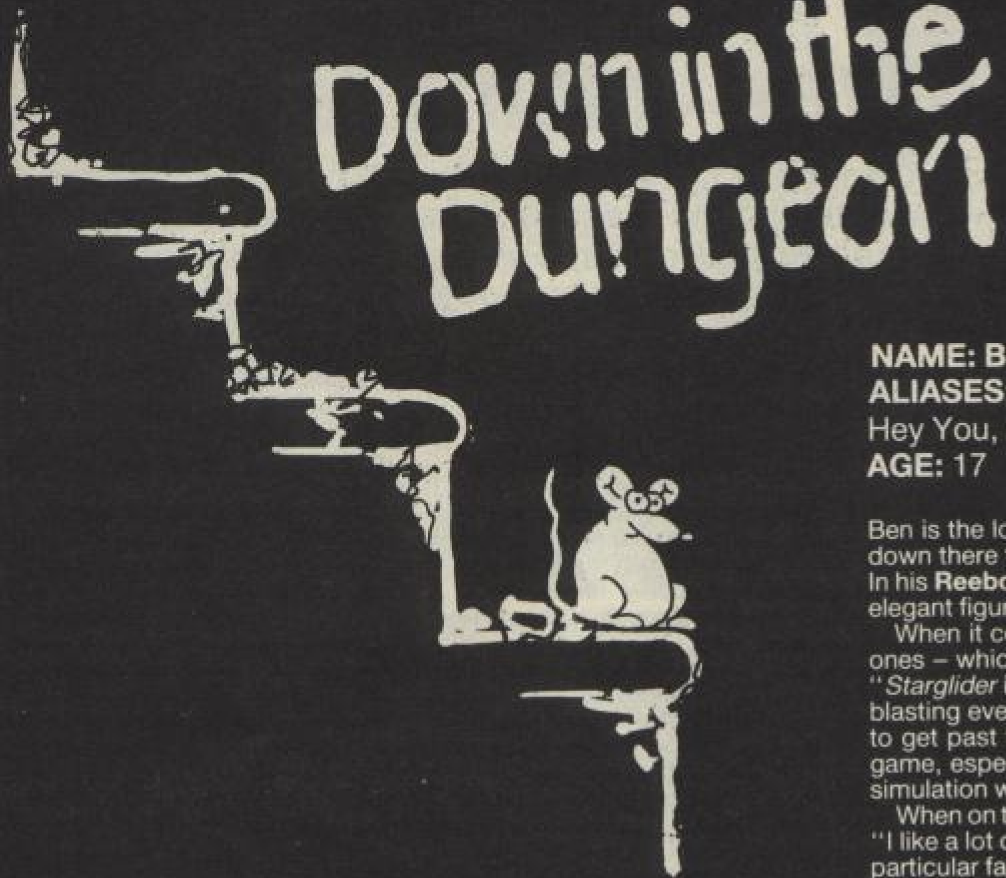


Isn't it awful? Just because those egomaniacs on ZZAP! plaster their ugly mugs and even uglier personalities all over their magazine, the prima donnas in the CRASH reviewing team are demanding their own bit of glory. So from now on, all the review comments will carry names.

And just who are these people? Incarcerated in the dank dripping dungeons beneath CRASH Towers, we found the three of them. Their crimes: too hideous to speak of. Their sentence: to play computer games for ever!

Take a peek at their prison dossiers . . . As you can see, our in-house lensperson Cameron Pound has taken special pleasure in using his wide-angle lens for the portraits just to make sure that the inmates' egos don't swell too much!

Down in the Dungeon





NAME: Ben Stone
ALIASES: Mr Label, Hey You, Lover Boy
AGE: 17

Ben is the longest surviving inmate of the CRASH dungeon. He's been down there for a couple of years now, and the strain is beginning to tell. In his **Reebok** trainers, **Levi** Jeans and **Farah** shirts, he cuts a sartorially elegant figure amongst the filth and vermin of his dungeon cell.

When it comes to computer games, Ben goes in for the more violent ones – which could go some way to explaining why he got locked up. "*Starglider* is great. There's this weird scenario, and you just go around blasting everything. *Cobra* is a real challenge: I haven't worked out how to get past the Midnight Slasher yet. *Harvey Headbanger* is a fun little game, especially on the Amstrad, and *World Games* is the only sports simulation worth playing."

When on the run, Mr Stone would often hide out in amusement arcades "I like a lot of machines, but *Battle Zone* is one that springs to mind as a particular favourite."

CRASH runs a fairly liberal prison regime – we allow the inmates their own music. Mr Stone likes **The Cure**, **The Smiths** and **Siouxsie and the Banshees** for reasons that escape the warders. His tastes in TV: "I like any trashy American sit–coms because they're an escape from prison life. **Eastenders** is really 'oright, innit?"



NAME: Mike Dunn
ALIAS: Skippy, Blusher
AGE: 15

The youngest ne'er do well in the gaol, Mr Dunn is still allowed parole to attend Ludlow School. His strangest ability is being able to turn bright red in an instant if anyone makes a joke at his expense (or mentions girlies).

Once again this man is a danger to society. His favourite computer games are *Cobra* "because it's so playable" and *Starglider 128* "The graphics are really neat, and the speech is superb."

Sounds heard coming from his cell are usually created by **Peter Gabriel** "His third and fourth albums and *So* are my favourite albums ever, ever, ever. *Games Without Frontiers* and *Big Time* are my favourite tracks." Mr Dunn often commandeers the prison video recorder (*told you it was a liberal prison!*–**ED**) to settle down to his favourite films including *Police Academy*, Santa Claus The Movie, and *Ghostbusters*. He also enjoys some TV comedy: "**Kenny Everett** just makes such a complete and utter prat of himself – he's funny" and *Saturday Live* "**Ben Elton**'s my fave 'cos he's modest and unpretentious like me." Strong dislikes include all TV game shows that involve greed, and the *Benny Hill Show*, his opinion of which should not be revealed in polite company (luckily he's never in polite company).

He's somewhat hard to please at the inmates' canteen. He dislikes all English cooking, and prefers Curry (with chips), Pizza, Lasagne, hula-hoops and tortilla chips.





NAME: Paul Sumner
ALIASES: Jolly Hockeysticks, The Fuzz
AGE: 21

The 'Old Lag' of the dungeon, he shows some signs of repentance – his stated aim is to make parole and join the Police Force. His taste in computer games reveal a ruthless streak. *Commando*, "because it's mindless", *Gauntlet*, "it's a bit different" and *Match Point*, "I've never got bored with it".

Doubtless from the proceeds of some foul crime, he has just equipped his cell with a rather expensive Hi-Fi which he is rather proud of, including NAD amplifier and CD player. He rather rubs it in by walking round the place reading CD REVIEW. What does he listen to on it? Well, once again **Peter Gabriel** is prominent and **Paul Simon** often gets an airing "Well, I've only heard *Graceland*, but its got amazingly funny lyrics. I can listen to nearly any chart music, thank goodness, otherwise I'd have a pretty horrible time listening to the radio."

Just to rub his high-rolling life style into the other inmates, Mr Sumner's Spectrum is encased in a SAGA keyboard, connected to an OPUS *Discovery*.

Despite this luxury, he does spend time with the other lags watching his favourite videos: *Legal Eagles*, "**Robert Redford** shows he can laugh and **Debra Winger** shows she can act. As for **Daryl Hannah**, she can forget it"; *Aliens*: "the visual effects work excellently." He also shows great prowess on the prison playing fields at hockey but describes it as "the only time I can let all my aggression out", which, if you get to watch him play, is alarming.

THE COIN-OP SENSATION FROM DATA EAST...

DATA EAST

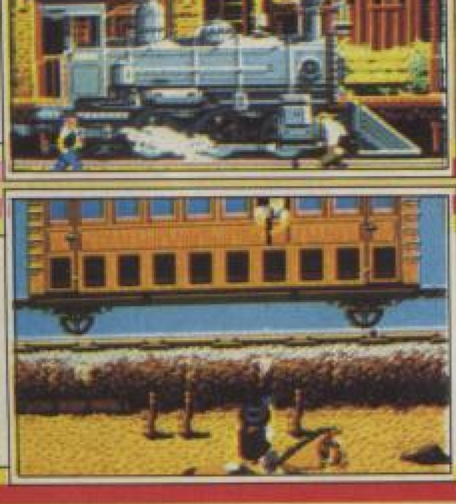
DATA EAST

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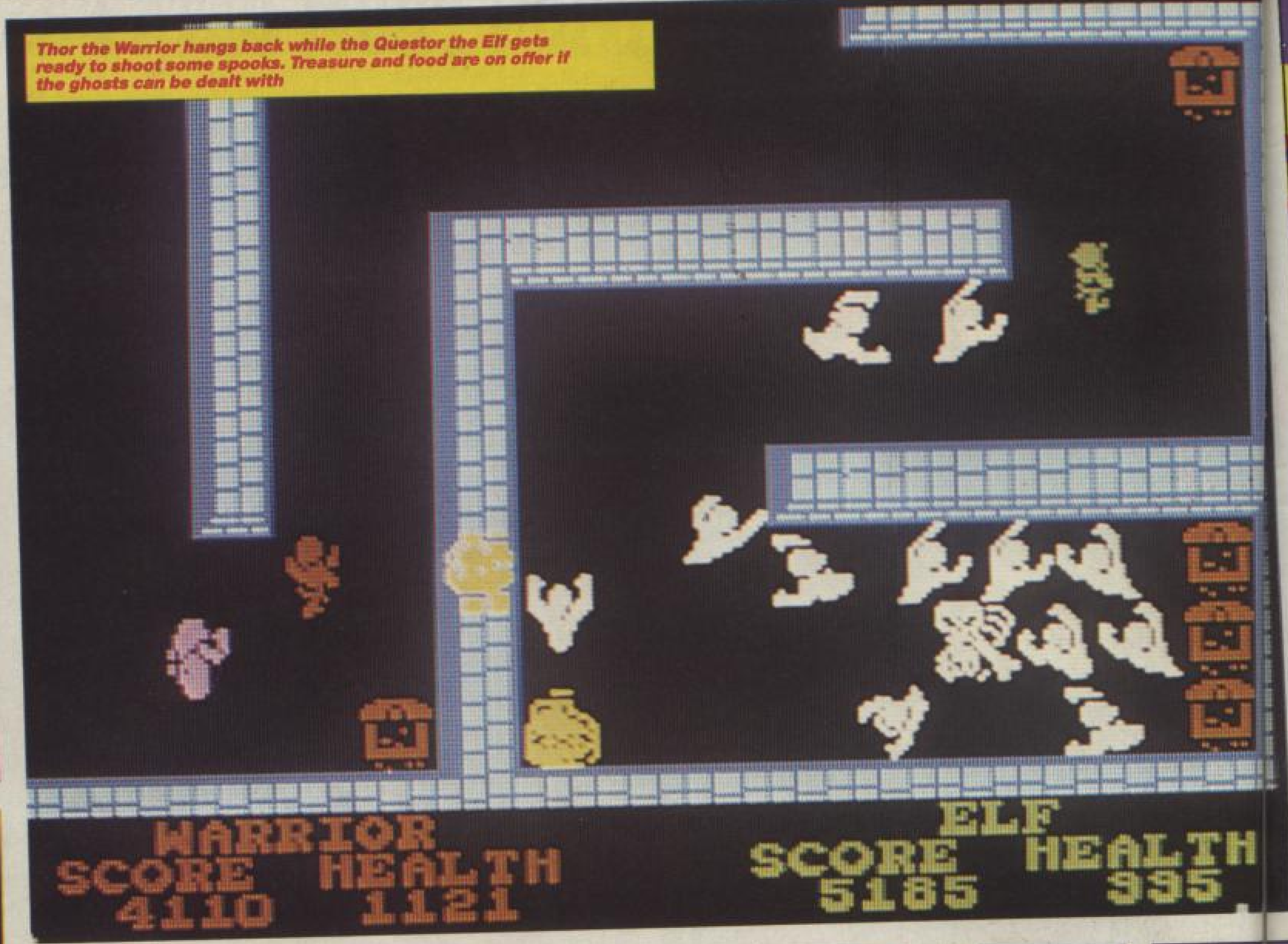
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U.S. GOLD LIMITED, 2/3 HOLFORD WAY, HOLFORD, BIRMINGHAM B6 7AX.



Thor the Warrior hangs back while the Questor the Elf gets ready to shoot some spooks. Treasure and food are on offer if the ghosts can be dealt with



Our dynamic duo have just entered a new level. Good job one of them is carrying a key – the entrance is a locked chamber. Questor could do with a snack to boost his health points . . .



Oops. Ga e O Parkins are era: they e ju

Producer: US Gold
Retail Price: **£8.99**
Authors: **Tony Porter, Kevin Bulmer, Bill Allen**

G·A·U·N·T·L·E·T

A CRASH Smash

Gauntlet 'The Official Conversion' has at last appeared. The main difference between the arcade classic and this version, is that US GOLD have produced a game for one or two players – whereas up to four combatants can enter the coin-op arena.

The package comes complete with extensive instructions to help

CRITICISM

" Gauntlet has turned out to be a much better game than any of its clones. The programmers have managed to capture a lot of the spirit of the arcade machine – this version is nearly as playable as the original and far cheaper. Graphically Gauntlet is pretty run-of-the-mill. The sound is generally lame, the tune is instantly forgettable and the effects are dull and infrequent. Don't be put off by these shortcomings – gameplay is where Gauntlet really picks up my marks: I could easily play it until the end. If you have been waiting for a decent game of this type to appear then I doubt that you'll find better. "

BEN

Gauntlet novices who didn't spend their formative years pumping coins into the arcade machine. The program is multi-load, with up to eight levels loading at a time.

To begin with, each player must choose one of the four characters, these are: Thor the Warrior, Thyra the Valkyrie, Merlin the Wizard, and Questor the Elf. Each has different levels of Strength, Armour and Magic Power. Strength determines how quickly a character can destroy opponents, Armour level determines the amount of damage a character sustains from a hit, while Magic Power affects the power of potions that are used. In a two player game, the pair of adventurers can work together, sharing the tasks between them and using their unique abilities to best effect .

The aim is to scurry around the spacious dungeons, blasting everything that moves and collecting as much food and treasure as possible. Keys must be found and collected so that locked sections of the dungeons can be entered and explored. While all this is going on, the exit to the next level must be located. Each dungeon consists of a maze of two-dimensional walls and doors, with exits to the other levels scattered about. At the start of each level a message details any special conditions that apply – for instance your shots stun your partner in some maze areas.

Characters begin with 2,000 health units, displayed on a counter at the bottom of the screen. Confrontations with the evil beings that inhabit the dungeons reduce health points, and death ensues when a character's health rating reaches zero. In the two-player game, a character can rejuvenate a dead partner, who re-enters with a zero score.

The dungeons are full of guards and demons waiting to do battle with intruders. Generators located in the mazes continually produce dozens of deadly denizens – unless they are quickly destroyed. Characters can either shoot the enemy or enter into hand-to-hand combat, which usually scores more points – at the expense of the loss of more energy. Hordes of opponents tend to congregate together in sections of the maze, just waiting for you to turn a corner or destroy a wall so they can get at you .

Ghosts are the most common opponents and hit a character once, drain some energy and then disappear: hand-to-hand fighting is pointless with spooks. Lobbers are sneaky fellows, throwing rocks and other heavy items over the maze walls. Demons spray fireballs which sap energy very rapidly. Grunts are armed with heavy clubs and run up to your character biffing away repeatedly. Sorcerers use their magic to defeat you, making themselves temporarily invisible and immune to your shots. Death is the toughest guardian of them all and can only be defeated by use of magic – the best approach is to avoid him altogether.

Food and drink (some of which is poisoned) can be collected to restore health and boost your score. Potions found in the mazes have a range of effects – some act as 'smart bombs', while special potions confer additional fighting

CRITICISM

" Hey wow! The biggest arcade hit that I never saw hits the Spectrum. Yeuch! What puny little graphics; but WOW! – what a game! This is just what Spectrum owners need: a proper, involved two-player game. Despite the fact that I am against most multi-load systems, it's hardly surprising that Gauntlet has got one; it must be one of the biggest games about. If you're only likely to play it on your own, then think before you splash out, but in two-player mode it's hard to stay away from. Well done US GOLD. "

MIKE

or shooting ability, increase your character's speed or improve magic power. All the collectable objects are picked up by walking over them, although potions can be shot, in which case their 'smart bomb' effect is reduced.

Points are awarded for each denizen despatched and for collecting objects. Every so often a bonus treasure room is encountered where the aim is to gather up all the treasure and escape before a time limit expires. Transporter pads appear on some levels, and stepping on one moves the player to another pad on the screen. As in the original game, some of the

CRITICISM

" At last the original game hits the streets (well the CRASH office anyway). This is just as playable as the arcade machine – and the conversion retains the fast screen scrolling. It even manages to keep the old 'come on follow me' feeling – if you're playing with a friend co-operation is essential as the dungeon scrolls around the characters on screen and it's easy to get trapped if you try to go your separate ways. Gauntlet is more of a shoot/ pick 'em up game than any of its clones, and as such it contains much more fast action fun. Cancel all engagements for the next month, Gauntlet has arrived! "

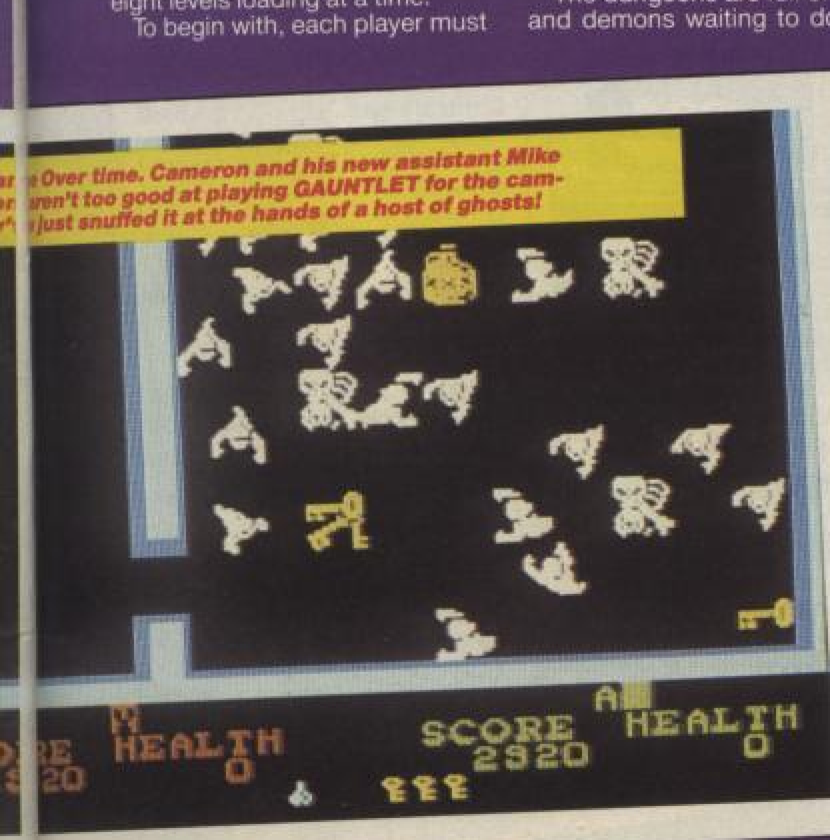
PAUL

walls can be destroyed by repeated shots, while stepping on a trap makes a section of wall disappear.

COMMENTS

Control keys: player 1/ player 2 – 1/8 Up, Q/I Down, S/K Left, D/L Right, Z/M Fire, CAPS/SPACE Use magic
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: adequate
Graphics: inevitably, a bit small
Sound: unremarkable
Skill levels: one
Screens: 512 scrolling levels
General rating: This conversion is let down a little by the graphics and sound, but the gameplay more than makes up for such deficiencies

Presentation	90%
Graphics	77%
Playability	94%
Addictive qualities	94%
Value for money	91%
Overall	92%



...Over time. Cameron and his new assistant Mike ...aren't too good at playing GAUNTLET for the cam- ...just snuffed it at the hands of a host of ghosts!

ALIENS

Producer: Electric Dreams
Retail Price: **£9.99**
Author: **Pennsoft and Soft Machine**

Mark Eyles, designer of *Back To The Future*, is behind this game-of-the-film.

Back on Earth after forty years floating in space, Ripley is horrified to find that the planet where she discovered the Aliens is now being colonised. No-one believes her gruesome story until contact is lost with the colonists . . . Grudgingly, she agrees to accompany a group of highly trained Space Marines on a rescue mission.

You direct that mission from the safety of the Mobile Tactical Operations Bay (MTOB), and are in command of Ripley, four Space Marines and an android. The action is viewed on a video display generated by the camera on the helmet of the character currently being controlled. You can move the sights of the Smart Gun held by the human, either to target the weapon or search the current location – the video camera follows the gunsight.

As well as the main video display, the control console also includes a panel for each of the six team members. These individual displays include a bar read-out that monitors the life status and stamina of the explorer – as a character gets near to exhaustion the bar flashes, and it changes colour when an Alien is attacking. The number of the room currently occupied is also given on each individual's display panel.

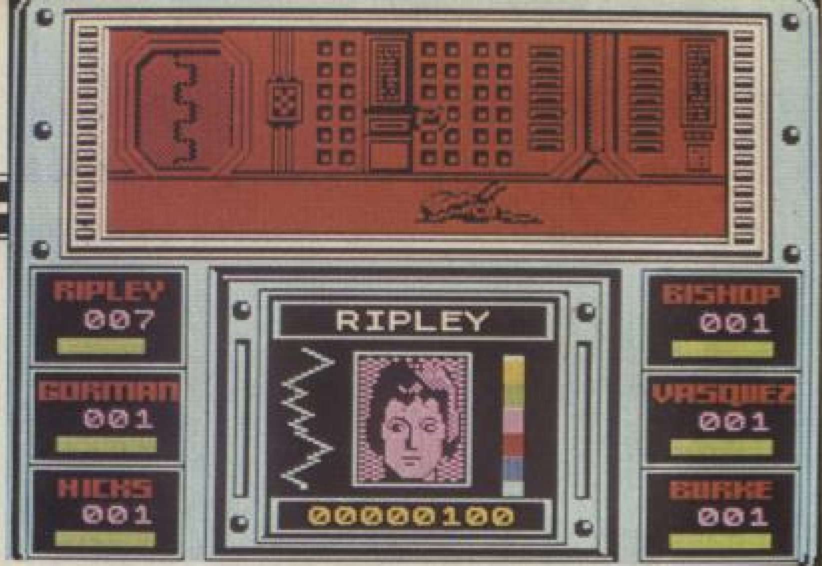
A press of the appropriate key gives control of a character, whereupon their portrait appears in the central control window. A bio-functions trace and a bar indicating the character's remaining Smart Gun ammunition also appear. The control window includes a counter that tots up the points collected for killing Aliens.

Characters can be moved around the complex, room by room, by using the doors – move the gunsight over a doorway and press fire to pass through. Rapid movement can be made by requesting the character being commanded to move North, South, East or West, and he or she can move up to nine rooms in any of these directions. As soon as you switch control to another team member, your multi-room movement order is executed – providing the character you have sent off doesn't encounter an Alien, find the way blocked by a pool of acid blood or come up against a locked door . . .

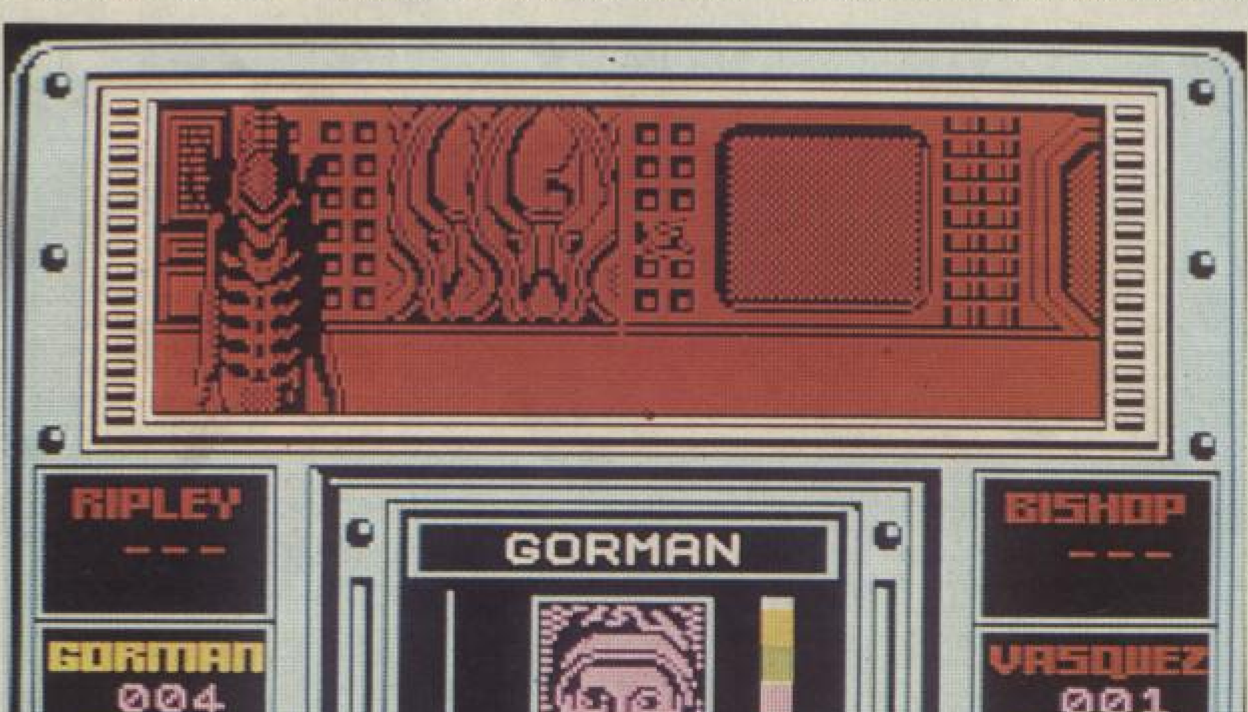
As the team moves through the complex, Aliens start to come out of hiding. When a character enters a room where there's an Alien, a warning alarm sounds. There are only a few moments in which to blast the monster before it realises someone is there and zooms in for the kill. If the Alien isn't eliminated, it dashes up to the viewscreen and the signal goes dead as it kills your soldier.

If one of the team members who is not currently under your direct control meets up with an Alien, the appropriate status bar turns yellow. If a rescue mission isn't executed rapidly, you lose the trapped team member. Aliens may also capture one of the humans and begin impregnating their victim – again a rescue mission is needed if a life is to be saved.

Ultimately, the aim is to enter the room where the Alien Queen lays her eggs and wreak mayhem. Don't expect the Alien hordes to ignore your presence, though . . .



Ripley prepares to leave after blasting another evil creature to a heap of acidic slime . . .



An Alien is heading straight for Gorman – quick shooting might save his life!

CRITICISM

●" **This has to be the best game-of-the-film to date: it really has captured the spirit of the movie. I found it scary to play – quite often when I was faced with an Alien I actually started to sweat. The strategy element of the game isn't much fun, but when coupled with the horrid slimy Aliens which crop up at the most unexpected times, the game as a whole works excellently. I can see myself playing this either until I've completed it or until I admit defeat – it is just very compelling. Go buy it, you won't regret it.** "

BEN

●" *I was really amazed when I started to play Aliens. To be honest, I thought that it was going to be a bit tacky – but* ELECTRIC DREAMS *have done a really good job. The only way to play this is late at night with all the lights off, and the TV extremely close to you. Basically it's just another 'stomp around the shop' type of game – but it has got loads of extra features to bring it alive. Well worth a gander.* "

PAUL

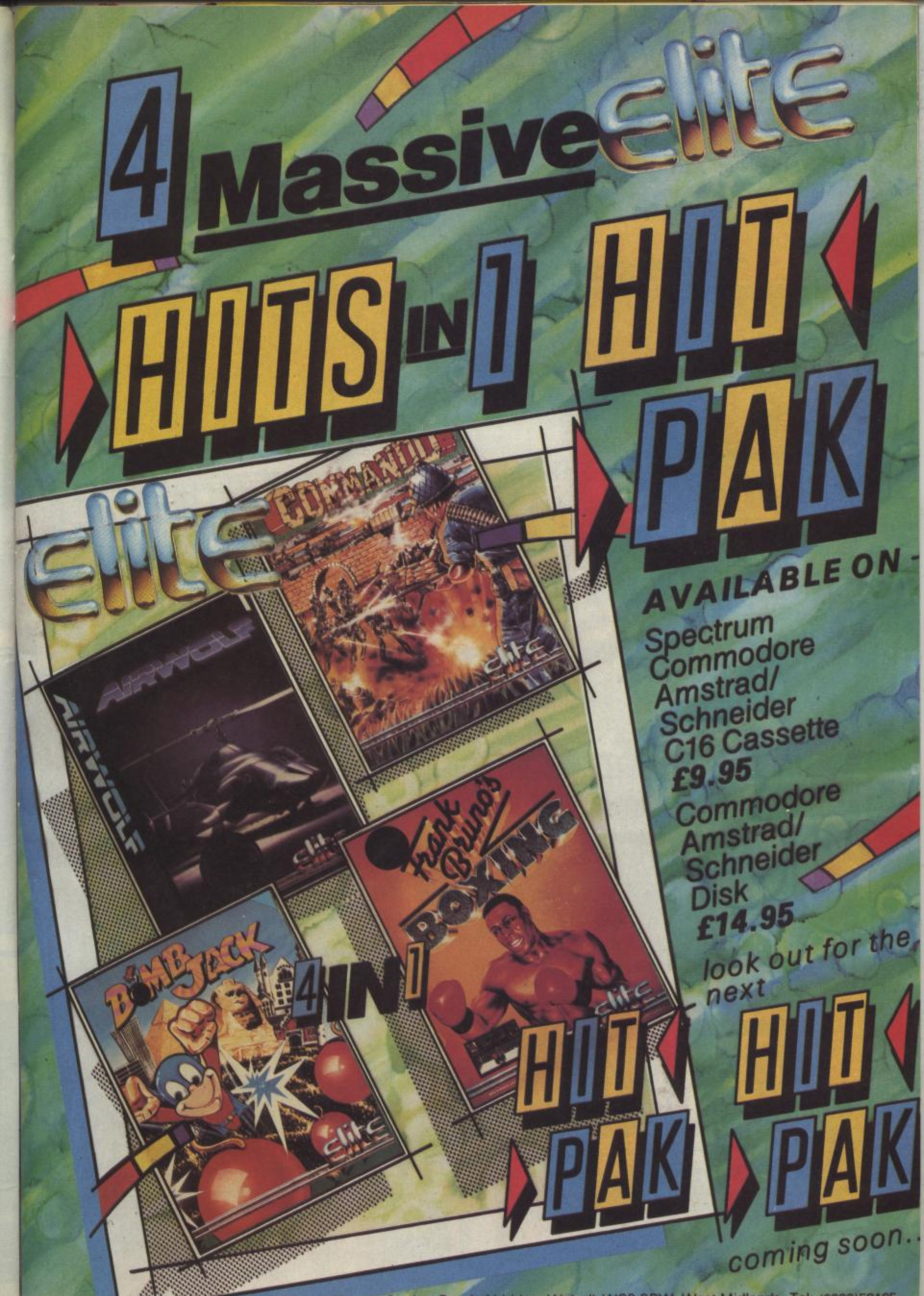
●" *Aliens* is a very good game. Doubtless it will gain a lot of sales from the film tie-in, but even in its own right it's well worth playing. The graphics are very neat with the Aliens suitably represented. Bearing in mind the fact that the film is classed as being a horror, I think it could have been more atmospheric (a somewhat difficult proposition on the Spectrum!). The title tune is fair, and overall, *Aliens* is a very playable game. I didn't find it terribly addictive, but other than that, I've no complaints. "

MIKE

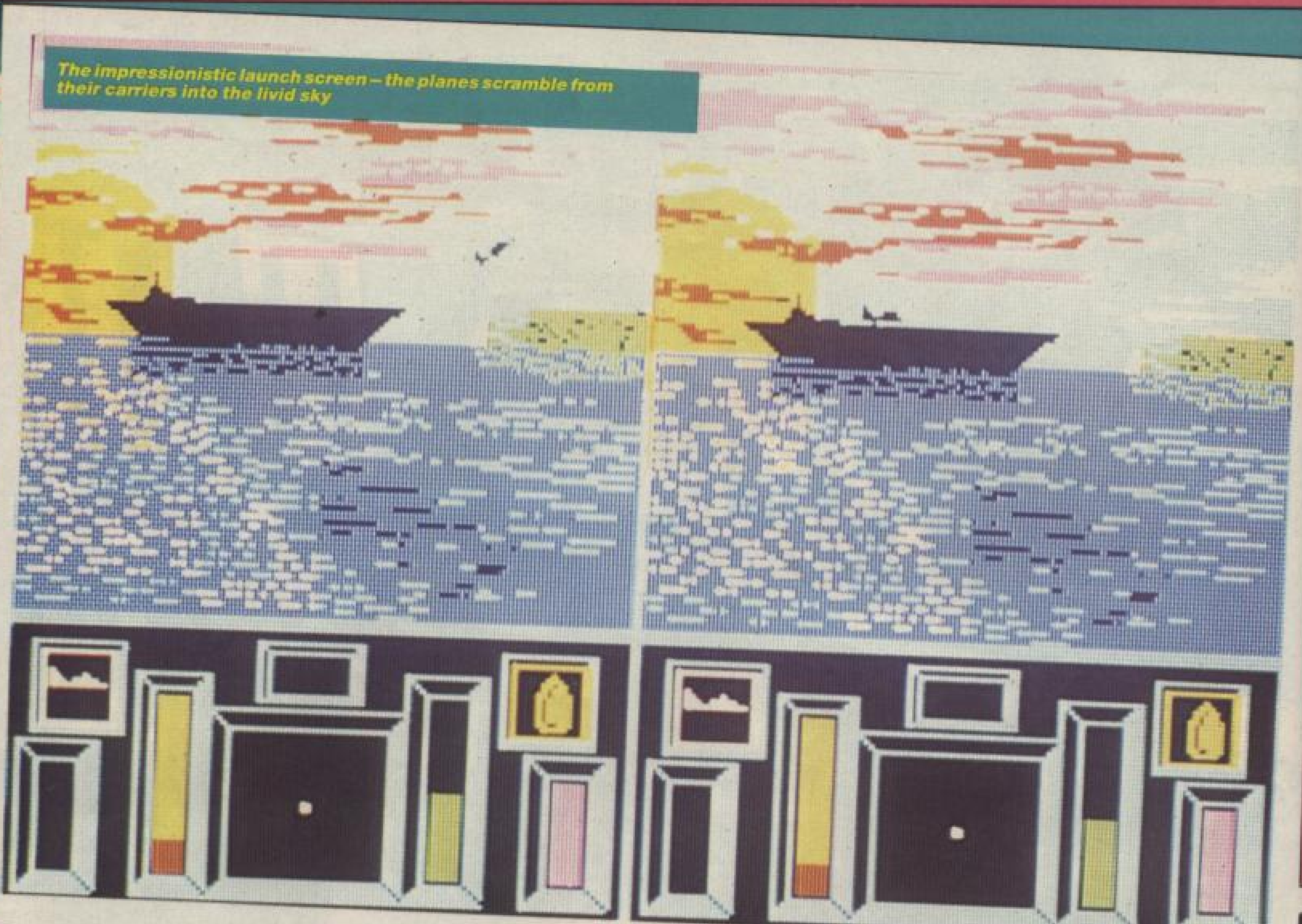
COMMENTS

Control keys: 7 Up, 6 Down, 5 left, 8 Right, 0 Fire; R Ripley, G Gorman, H Hicks, I Bishop, V Vasquez, B Burke; N north, S south, E east, W west
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: monochrome play area
Graphics: detailed, with neat Aliens
Sound: good tune at the beginning with spot effects throughout
Skill levels: one
Screens: 255
General rating: A good attempt at capturing the action and atmosphere of the film

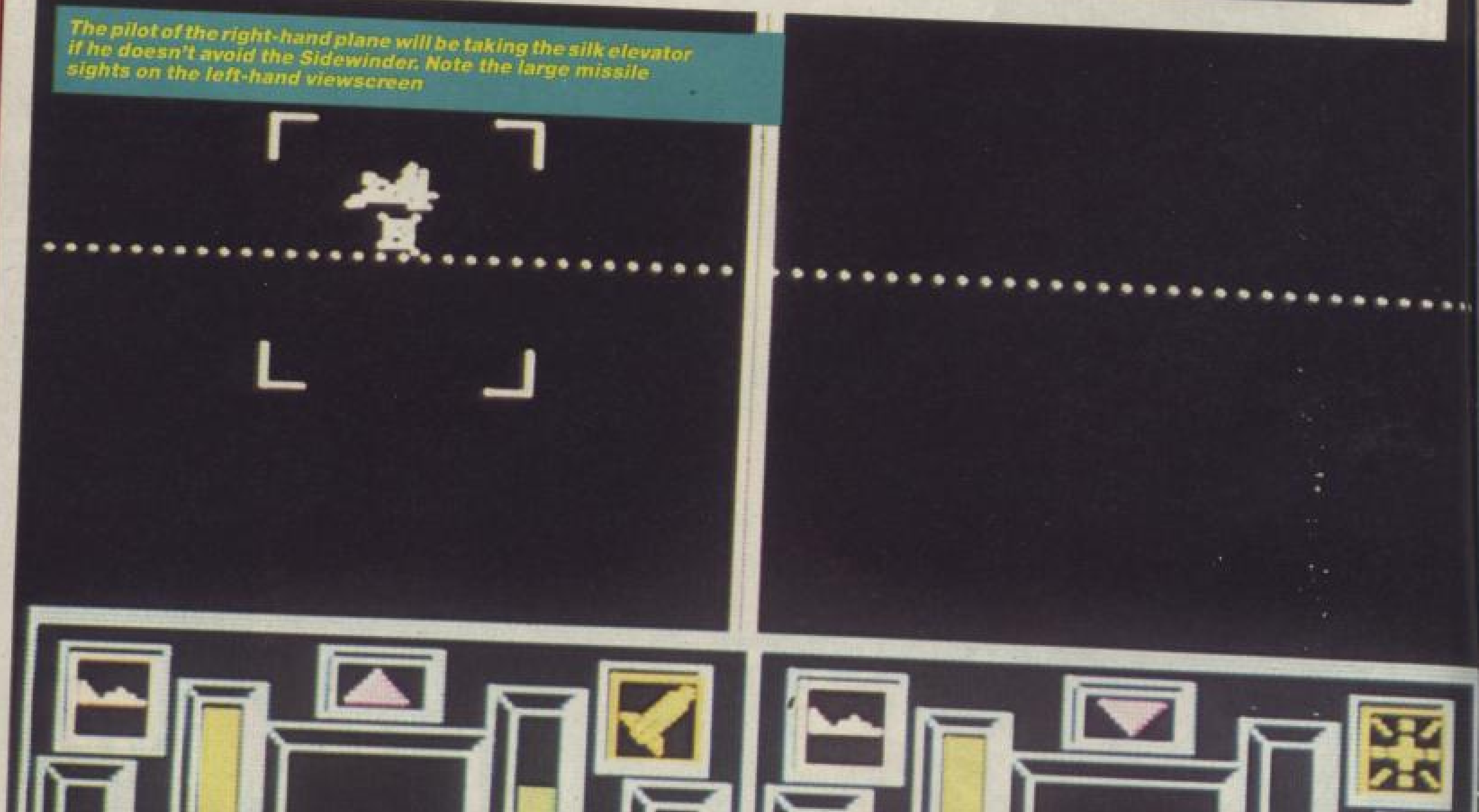
Presentation	88%
Graphics	85%
Playability	84%
Addictive qualities	81%
Value for money	82%
Overall	84%



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The impressionistic launch screen – the planes scramble from their carriers into the livid sky



The pilot of the right-hand plane will be taking the silk elevator if he doesn't avoid the Sidewinder. Note the large missile sights on the left-hand viewscreen

Producer: Ocean
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Mike Lamb**

T·O·P G·U·N

Now's your chance to emulate the exploits of hunky superstar Tom Cruise and the rest of the pilots at America's top school for combat flyers. Seated firmly in the cockpit of an F14 Tomcat you can engage the computer in a high-tech dogfight, or battle it out with a friend in a head-to-head session.

The action is viewed on a split screen which shows the instrument panel and cockpit views of the two opposing aircraft. The main display uses simulated 3D and vector graphics to show the aerial antics, with a dotted line marking the artificial horizon.

A joystick can be used to control the fighter in the air in the time-honoured flight simulator tradition, with the throttle and weapon selection effected on the keyboard, or the keyboard can be used on its own. The controls are self-centering – left to its own devices a plane flies straight and level.

The Tomcat's armoury includes cannon, missiles and flares. The appropriate icon is called into a window on the cockpit display before using the cannon or pressing fire to launch a flare or heat-seeking missile. The cannon, which overheat with continual use, are sighted with a cross-hair and the border flashes red when shells hit home. It takes twenty-five hits with cannon shell to destroy the opposing plane.

Selecting a missile brings a large, square sight onto your viewscreen. The target must be kept within this area for a countdown of three seconds to allow the Sidewinder missile to lock on to the enemy plane before fire is pressed. One hit from a missile is fatal, and the only way to avoid being blown to smithereens if a missile is on your tail is to drop flares to confuse its guidance system and keep away from it for twenty seconds – the missile then runs out of fuel and dives to the ground.

Speed and altitude read-outs are superimposed on the cockpit view, and the altitude reading flashes if the plane is dangerously low (below a thousand feet). The instrument panel includes displays that show the throttle setting, cannon temperature, thrust, and damage sustained. A radar scanner gives the relative horizontal position of your opponent and this display turns red when a missile is locked onto your tail. An arrow indicates whether the enemy plane is above or below you and is used in conjunction with the radar to locate the enemy. Windows are used to display the weapon icon currently selected and the attitude of your fighter.

In the one-player version, missions consist of shooting down three enemy planes, and become progressively more difficult – on the first two levels, the computer opponent does not use missiles. In two player mode, each player gets three aircraft, and the winner is the pilot who stays airborne the longest . . .

CRITICISM

" I was very dubious about this one at first: yet another crummy licenced game I thought. But happily I was wrong, Top Gun **really is a good game. I can perhaps see myself getting bored with the one-player mode after a relatively short time as there is only one opponent to go for, but luckily there is a two-player mode which is brilliant. You can shoot the hell out of your best mate, and the computer ceases to be a problem. I really do like this but I couldn't see it being addictive for longer than a month or so. "**

BEN

CRITICISM

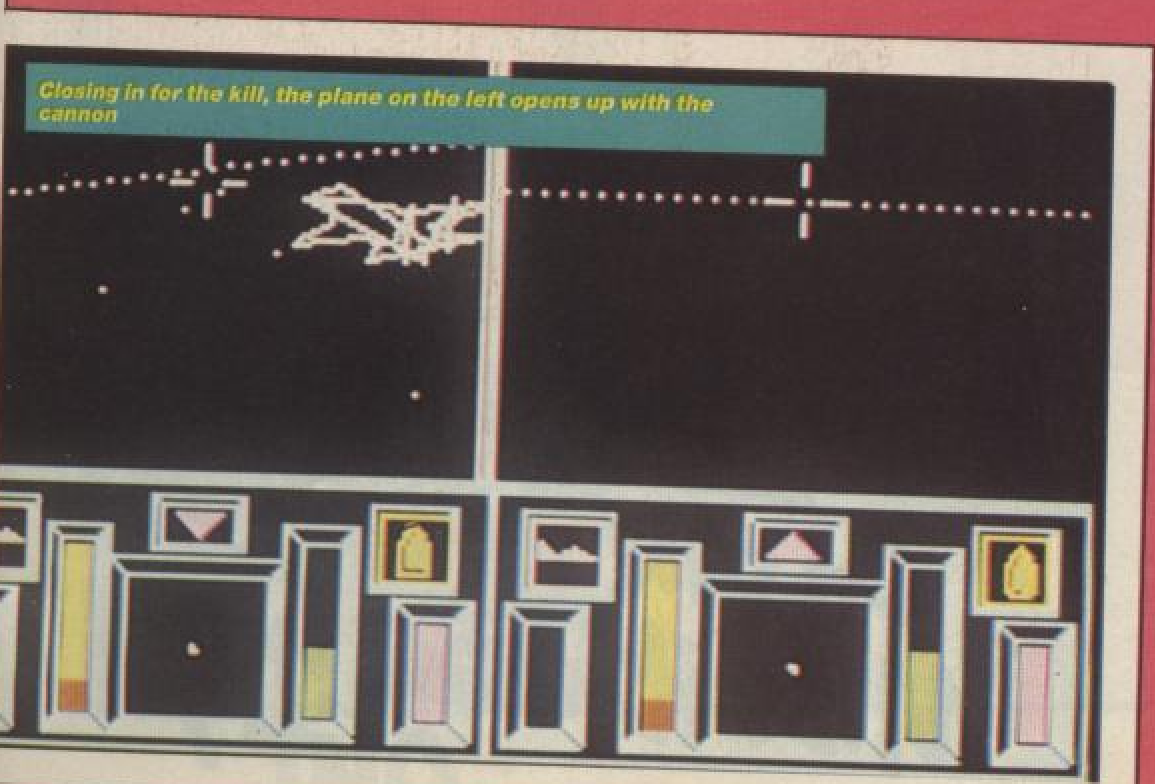
" I stand corrected. Before Top Gun, **flight simulators were out as far as I was concerned – now all that has changed. It just goes to prove: a) what OCEAN can do when they're not doing** Its A Knockout; **and b) that flight simulators are not necessarily boring. The graphics are fast and neat, even though the launch section looks a bit primitive. There's a lot to** Top Gun, **and it has all the addictivity that it needs. Neat graphics, lots of playability and a jolly fun game. Worth getting. "**

MIKE

CRITICISM

" Top Gun **surprised me. I was expecting some old licensing trash, but this is a really good film tie-in. The graphics are extremely well animated and the split screen idea works excellently. It seems pointless having the one-player mode, as the enemy planes are so easy to blow out of the air. I would have liked a skill level option, but the two-player mode more than compensates as you can really show your flying prowess. OCEAN seem to be one of the few companies who know that the Spectrum can play a decent tune, and they've certainly proved it here.** Top Gun **is a brilliant game and well worth getting. "**

PAUL



Closing in for the kill, the plane on the left opens up with the cannon

COMMENTS

Control keys: :edefinable – climb, dive, bank left, bank right and fire; player 1/player 2 – A/L increase thrust, Z/SYM SHIFT decrease thrust, CAPS/SPACE select weapon
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: monochromatic play area
Graphics: rapid vector display that gets a bit indistinct when the enemy is far away
Sound: three great tunes and excellent effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: one
General rating: A fast and addictive air-combat game in two-player mode; not so good one-up

Presentation	92%
Graphics	79%
Playability	94%
Addictive qualities	90%
Value for money	91%
Overall	**90%**

TERRA CRESTA

Producer: Imagine
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Jonathan Smith**

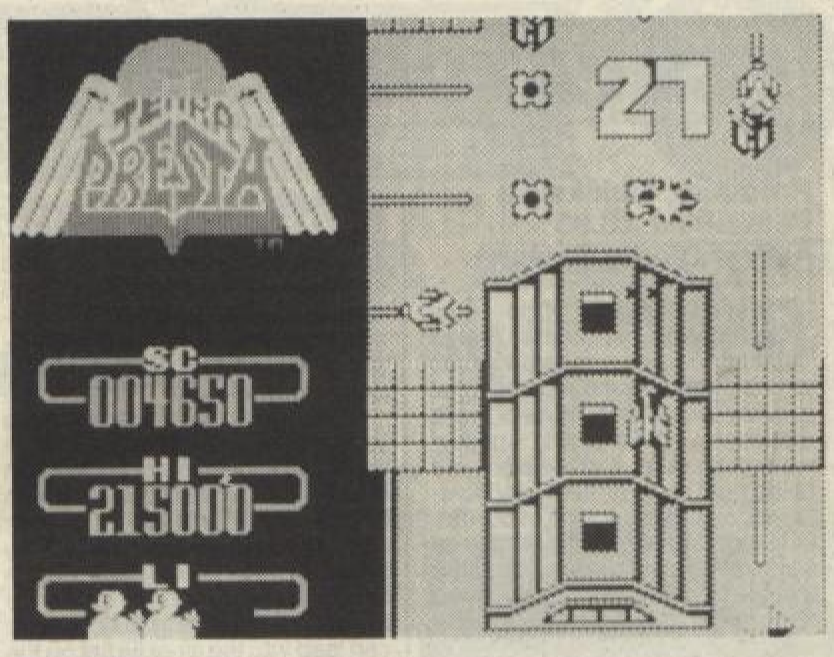
IMAGINE's latest coin-op conversion, *Terra Cresta*, casts you as the pilot of a Terra Cresta fighter – a futuristic spaceship capable of great destruction. Your mission is to destroy the alien fighters and ground installations which threaten your people. A planet's surface scrolls beneath the Terra Cresta as alien forces launch head-on attacks, and constantly double back to strike from behind. Armed with super lasers, you blast and shoot everything in sight.

The aliens fire rockets and missiles at your ship and they may be either air-to-air or ground based. Constant evasion is required as the missiles are equipped with a homing device. Also, alien craft are not confined to set flight patterns, and appear at random from all sides of the screen.

Numbered silos appear on the ground. Destroying one of them earns you extra parts or weapons for your fighter. These extra pieces of equipment are fitted to your craft by positioning it below the component as it is blown from a silo. Once the craft has been upgraded it is possible to enter Formation Mode, when the component modules separate and increase fire power: the Terra Cresta can then fire arcs of laser energy rather than single bolts.

As the game progresses and more and more extras are bolted onto your ship, so firepower increases until finally it turns in to a massive blasting machine, equipped to take on the ultimate robotic opponent which appears at the end of the landscape.

Extra points can be scored by killing the dinosaurs that romp around on the ground, and in true arcade style the left-hand portion of the screen contains a high-score to beat. Your three lives are represented by pictures of ducks. If an alien scores a hit on the Terra Cresta a life is lost unless an add-on has been collected from a numbered silo, in which case the extra equipment is forfeited.



Cam continues to do battle as a silo appears on screen

CRITICISM

● **"I feel that this is the most successful of the many vertically-scrolling shoot 'em ups that we've seen over the last few months. Despite the tiny playing area and the high level of difficulty, I really enjoyed playing this for the short time that I had with it. There is little similarity between this and the arcade original – okay, so the same enemy must be overcome, but the layout isn't similar at all. Having said that, the game plays very well in its own right. I'd recommend this – it doesn't really look much but it is well playable."**

BEN

● *"This game is virtually identical to* US GOLD*'s* Xevious, *with the major difference that this is much more fun to play. Colour has been used effectively to depict the many different types of terrain, and the sound effects and music are excellent. The gameplay is very fast, and a lot of concentration is needed while dodging missiles. The only thing that I don't like is that one mistake sends you straight back to the beginning – very frustrating. This is amongst the best shoot 'em ups that I've played on the Spectrum, although a two-player option would improve it."*

PAUL

● "Shoot 'em ups often rank among my favourite games, and *Terra Cresta* is no exception. Though the graphics are tiny, the scrolling is amazingly smooth and the whole game is very playable. In the playability stakes, *Terra Cresta* is very well catered for. It's well presented, both in the packaging and on screen, and it's things like this which go a long way towards making a game good value for money. I don't know about the accuracy of the conversion, but if you fancy a slightly unoriginal and expensive shoot 'em up – that's quite a lot of fun – *Terra Cresta*'s your game."

MIKE

The Terra Cresta fighter blasts its way through the waves of oncoming alien craft

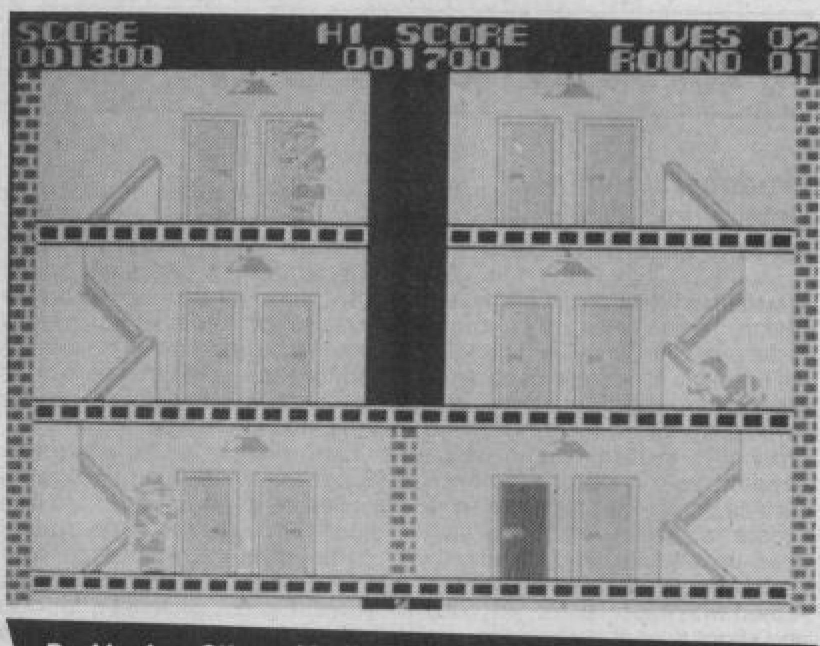


COMMENTS

Control keys: definable – up, down, left, right, fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: unremarkable but effective
Graphics: fairly good with neat backgrounds
Sound: possibly the game's best feature
Skill levels: one
Screens: vertically scrolling play area
General rating: A slick, enjoyable shoot 'em up

Presentation	88%
Graphics	75%
Playability	84%
Addictive qualities	82%
Value for money	76%
Overall	**81%**

ELEVATOR ACTION



Ducking low, Otto avoids the trenchcoated enemy agents

Producer: Quicksilva
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Binary Design**

Secret agent Otto has received his orders. Ahead of him lies a mission of the utmost importance to national security. Enemy scientists have developed their most deadly weapon to date, and the plans are being held at a high-security skyscraper on the other side of border. Otto has been given the task of penetrating this building, nabbing the plans and making his way to the ground floor for a quick getaway.

Proceedings begin with a short animated sequence showing Otto making a daring rooftop landing before he enters a lift that takes him down to the top floor. From here on he's under your control.

Unfortunately for Otto, the plans have been scattered throughout the building and are only to be found behind red doors. His basic aim is to open these doors, collect the pieces that make up the plans, and then go down to the waiting car on street level. It is impossible for Otto to leave the building before he's collected the entire set – attempt to do so and he finds himself back in the middle of the building.

The skyscraper's floors (which widen towards the bottom) are inter-connected by a system of elevators and escalators. Elevators cannot move unless occupied, and are activated by pressing the required direction control. Escalators are operated by standing next to them, and again pressing up or down. Similarly red doors are opened by standing next to their handle, and pressing down.

Enemy guards are searching the building for Otto, and they have orders to shoot on sight. Otto can defend himself, and is armed with the latest in automatic pistols. Being a top agent, he is also trained in the martial arts and is can kick the guards to death. To dodge the oncoming bullets, Otto can leap into the air or lie flat on the floor. These skills are not that vital at first, but come in handy in the later levels when the guards gain the ability to duck and fire low. A trick Otto has learned from experience is to shoot the lights out when he is in trouble. This can only be done while using the elevator, as the lampshades hug the ceilings and cannot be reached by jumping.

When all the plans are collected, it's time to rush down to the waiting car for a quick getaway – that is, to the next and harder level . . .

CRITICISM

● **"I wonder if elevator games will take off on the Spectrum. I hope they don't if this is the best that the companies can offer. The gameplay is generally slow and quite infuriating, so I couldn't play it for long before pulling the plug. The graphics would be alright by themselves but the use of colour is sloppy and messes up the whole screen. The sound is below average: there are no tunes and the effects are minimal. All in all I'd stay away from this one. There are good arcade conversions around already and most of them are taken from better originals."**

BEN

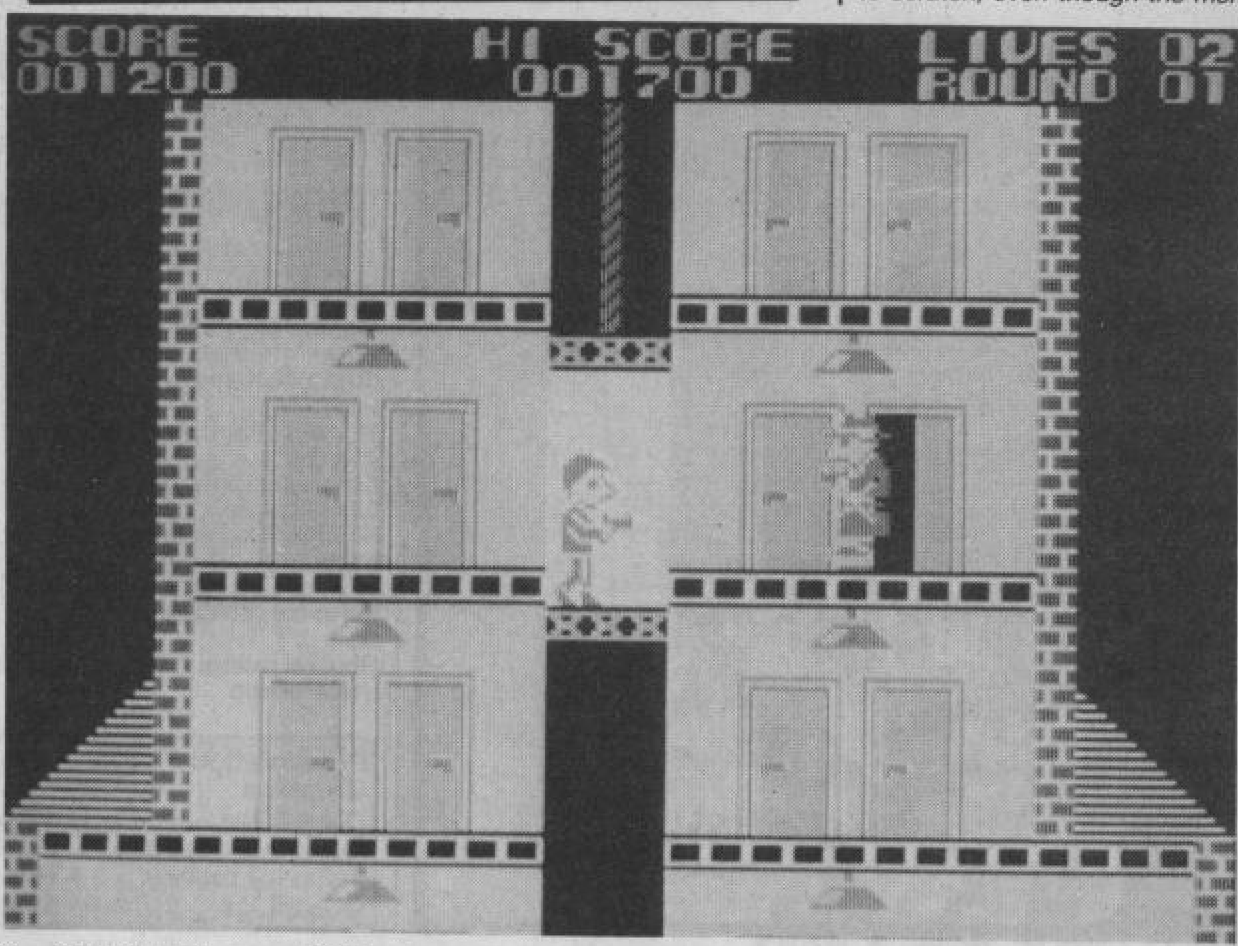
● *"Initially I was attracted to* Elevator Action *as it has good graphics and is quite fun to play – but the game doesn't contain anything that is in the slightest bit addictive. The animation is well up to scratch, even though the men move in a peculiar fashion. I liked the idea of moving up and down the building, and trying to trap people on top of the elevator. Sliding up and down the stairs was also fun, but the slight appeal of all these little features soon wore off. This is easy to get into, but contains little to keep one addicted for long, and thus is a bit too expensive."*

PAUL

● "Despite the very simple scenario and game idea, *Elevator Action* should win awards for addictiveness. Moving up and down lifts and shooting baddies as you go is one of the most typical game bases around, but the implementation is excellent. None of the elements which make it so good are immediately apparent – the graphics are comparatively poor and the sound is minimal. These problems however are more than compensated for by the incredible gameplay. It's well worth looking at."

MIKE

Otto has an 'uplifting' experience



COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, O left, P right, SYM SHIFT Fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: a bit garish with some clash and attribute problems
Graphics: clearly defined characters, but slightly jerky scrolling
Sound: a few spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: eight buildings
General rating: A well presented game, though possibly lacking in addictive qualities

Presentation	78%
Graphics	76%
Playability	77%
Addictive qualities	73%
Value for money	71%
Overall	**72%**

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IT'S A KNOCKOUT

Producer: Ocean
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Keith A Purkiss**

Six European countries compete in the wacky events that make up *It's a Knockout*, the TV show that was all the rage years ago. Now OCEAN bring a taste of the action to your computer screen in another TV tie-in.

Teams play against one another in five events and the computer calls on each country in turn to compete against the clock – a horizontal bar in the status area shows the time remaining in the current game. The computer acts as 'master of ceremonies', updating the scoreboard as necessary, calling teams into the arena to attempt events, and playing for countries that have not been allocated to a human player. A marathon game is played by all the countries and the computer chooses when a team should compete in this sixth event.

Fun with food initiates the contest in *Flying Flans*, played in a room divided by a wall. The computer controls a pair of flan-flingers who use a see-saw on the left of the screen to propel flans into the air. You control a waiter on the other side of the wall and the aim is to catch the airborne puds by moving the waiter so they land on his tray. As flans are dropped, the floor gets slippery and the waiter starts to lose his footing.

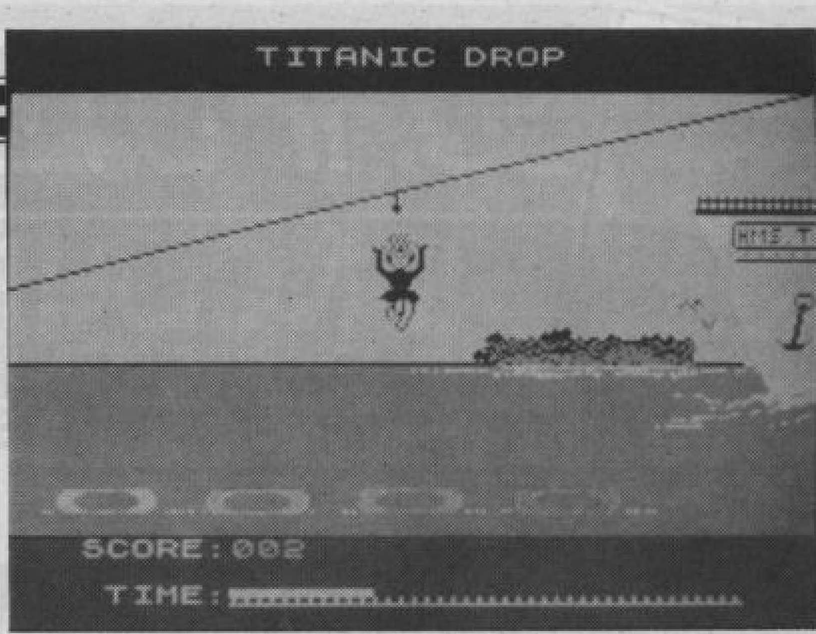
Then it's from the dining room to the desert for *Harlem Hoppers*. Balls are rolled down a camel's back zooming over the hump before shooting into the air as they leave the camel's tail. The contestant has to run and catch the balls, but is attached to a strong piece of elastic anchored to the left of the screen which restricts movement. To make life a little more awkward, the ground had been well greased.

Members of your team are all at sea for *Titanic Drop*. They are standing on the bow of a ship and take it in turns to use a pulley and slide down an angled rope. To score points they must let go of the rope at the right moment and land in the middle of one of four rubber rings floating in the water.

Diet of Worms sees your character dressed in a chicken suit, romping around a green field pecking at worms that peek through the grass. Worms must be collected and placed in a container at the foot of the screen.

The final event places you in competition with a computer controlled runner on a split-screen horizontally-scrolling obstacle course. Walls, water troughs and giant rolling balls have to be negotiated and speed kept up by frantic key pounding or joystick waggling.

In the marathon, *Bronte Bash*, you are a crane operator controlling a ton weight which moves horizontally along the sky above a row of trapdoors. The weight is dropped by pressing and holding fire, and every so often a dinosaur pops his head out of a trapdoor selected at random. The idea is to bop the monster on the head before it disappears. As the game progresses the dinosaurs get cannier, remaining above ground for shorter and shorter periods of time.



Another one of those good old games all about people getting horribly wet. Ho–ho–ho

CRITICISM

● **"This really is the pits. The gameplay is about as compelling as watching paint dry. The graphics are awful: there's lots of colour clash and the characters are badly drawn and apallingly animated. The sound is also below average – there are no tunes and the effects are dodgy. I'd keep well away from this if I was you. Nobody deserves to waste their money on dross like this."**

BEN

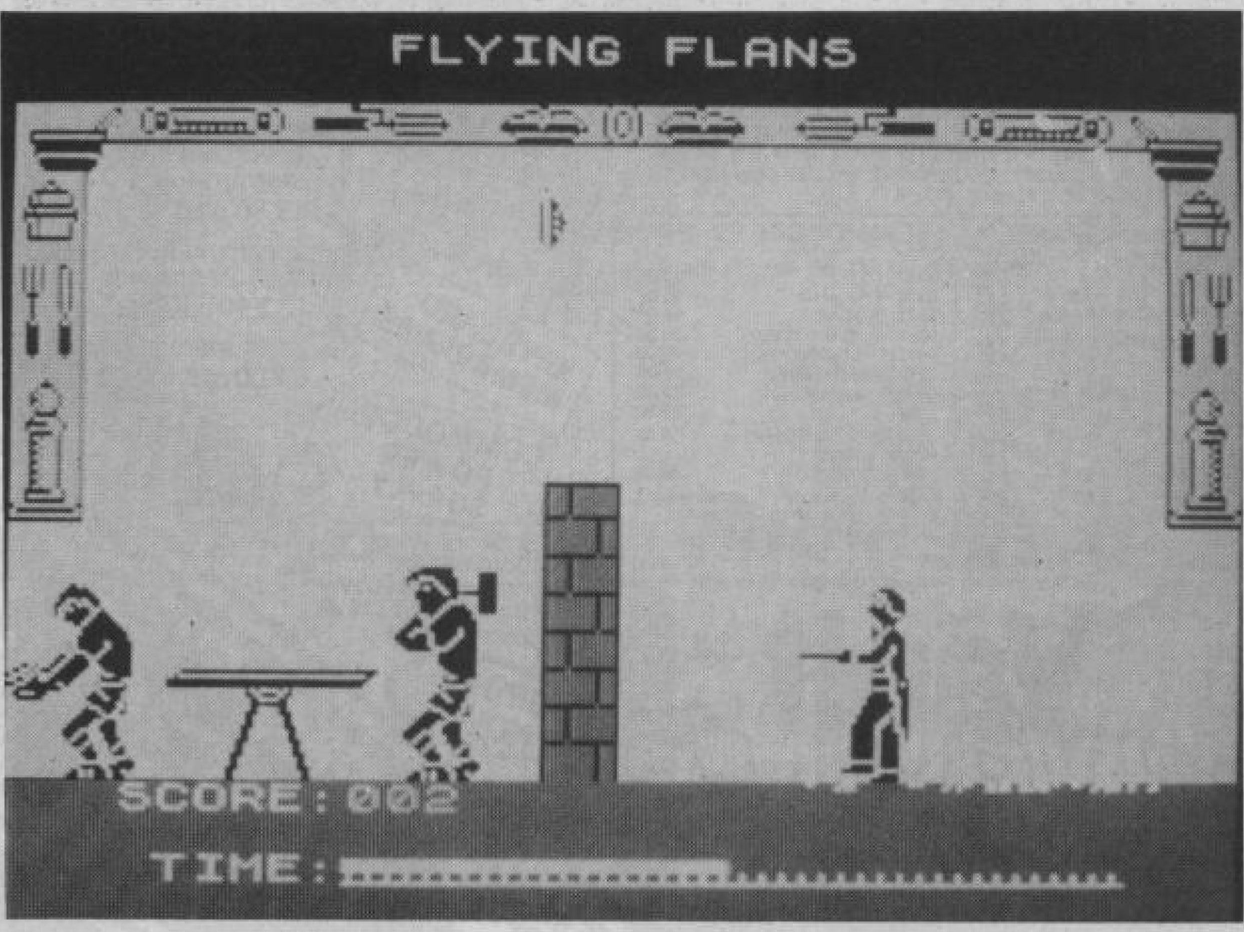
● *"Thank goodness* OCEAN haven't made a complete hash of this game – but it still isn't that good. I reckon the graphics are fairly well done – each screen contains loads of colour. At least the events are like the stupid things that happened in that awful TV programme. The sound is very poor, and doesn't add any atmosphere – where's Stuart Hall's idiotic cackling? I feel that the game is too short to be any fun playing, and the events don't involve much work to get any kind of score. It's a Knockout *may appeal to the younger market, but most people will find it very shallow and boring."*

PAUL

● "Well, Games without Frontiers (Jeux Sans Frontiers) by Peter Gabriel is definitely the song to play this to. There are major differences between record, TV programme, and game. The record is superb. The TV programme was bearable. The game is dire. The feel of the game is decidedly dodgy – it doesn't respond to the controls consistently, and when you add it all up there's not much depth to *It's A Knockout*. OCEAN's effort is pretty grim – and I can't understand why the company that managed to turn out decent simulations like the two Daley Thompson games should produce this."

MIKE

Catch the flans flying through the air on the tray. If you miss, it won't half make a mess. He–he–he



COMMENTS

Control keys: Q-P up; A-ENTER down; CAPS, C, N left; Z, V, M right; X, B, SYM SHIFT fire
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: a bit garish
Graphics: weak animation; uninspired
Sound: blippy spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: seven
General rating: A poor multi-event game – OCEAN would have done better to have applied some of the skills that lay behind the *Daley Thompson* games

Presentation	71%
Graphics	43%
Playability	38%
Addictiveness	36%
Value for money	33%
Overall	**39%**

DONKEY KONG

Producer: Ocean
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Sentient Software**

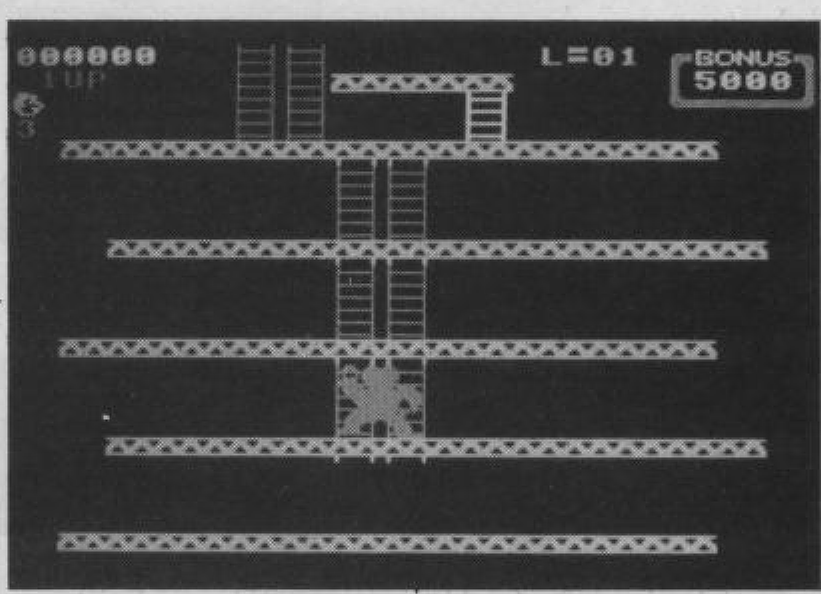
Some three years after the first *Kong* games appeared, and after two attempts at *Kong* games themselves OCEAN have now released an officially licensed version of the NINTENDO arcade game *Donkey Kong*.

A damsel is in extreme distress – she's been captured by a mad gorilla who has scurried into a partly completed building with her. Enter Mario the carpenter, rescuer of fair damsels. Mario has to make his way up four sections of the building, using ladders, ramps and lifts while the enraged monkey rains missiles down on his head.

Mario earns points in several ways. Leaping over the missiles Kong hurls at him adds to the score, and jumping several missiles at once is particularly rewarding. Hammers can be collected which allow the hero to stop jumping and start pulverising projectiles for extra points – but their power only lasts for a while. Some objects can be collected, and yeild points when Mario picks them up. Finally, a bonus meter at the top of the screen ticks down as Mario dallies on the way, and the points remaining on the clock when a sheet is completed are added to the overall score.

Kong's stock of weapons never runs out. The objects he hurls all obey the laws of gravity, bouncing along the platforms and skittering down ladders. If Mario touches a missile he loses one of his three lives. Care has to be taken when using ladders or leaping a trundling projectile as Mario can touch a missile moving along a higher platform while avoiding another on the current platform. To make matters more complicated for the heroic carpenter, semi-intelligent fireballs move around the screen oblivious to the calls of gravity – they can move left and right and up and down ladders.

On the first screen Mario has to contend with rolling barrels, on the second he is faced with deadly pies and conveyor belts while lifts and bouncing nasties appear on the third sheet. In the final confrontation with Kong on the fourth screen, Mario has to dodge rampant fireballs while removing rivets from the network of girders. When the rivets are removed the insane monkey falls and Mario gets the girl . . . until Kong recovers and the whole process starts over again!



Donkey Kong carries the hapless heroine up the scaffolding to his pearch on level one

CRITICISM

● **"So why are OCEAN releasing a conversion from an arcade machine that's as old as the hills – and wasn't really much good in its day? The thing that really confuses me is that they've done a** Kong **lookalike already, weird! The game is without a doubt the best** Kong **game around, but that's not really saying much. The gameplay is a little more difficult than on the arcade machine, but it's not very compelling so I couldn't really be bothered to complete it. The graphics and sound are about average for this type of game: nothing remarkable. On the whole I feel that this would be better as a budget game, or even as a freebie on the back of one of OCEAN's better titles, but not as a full-price game."**

BEN

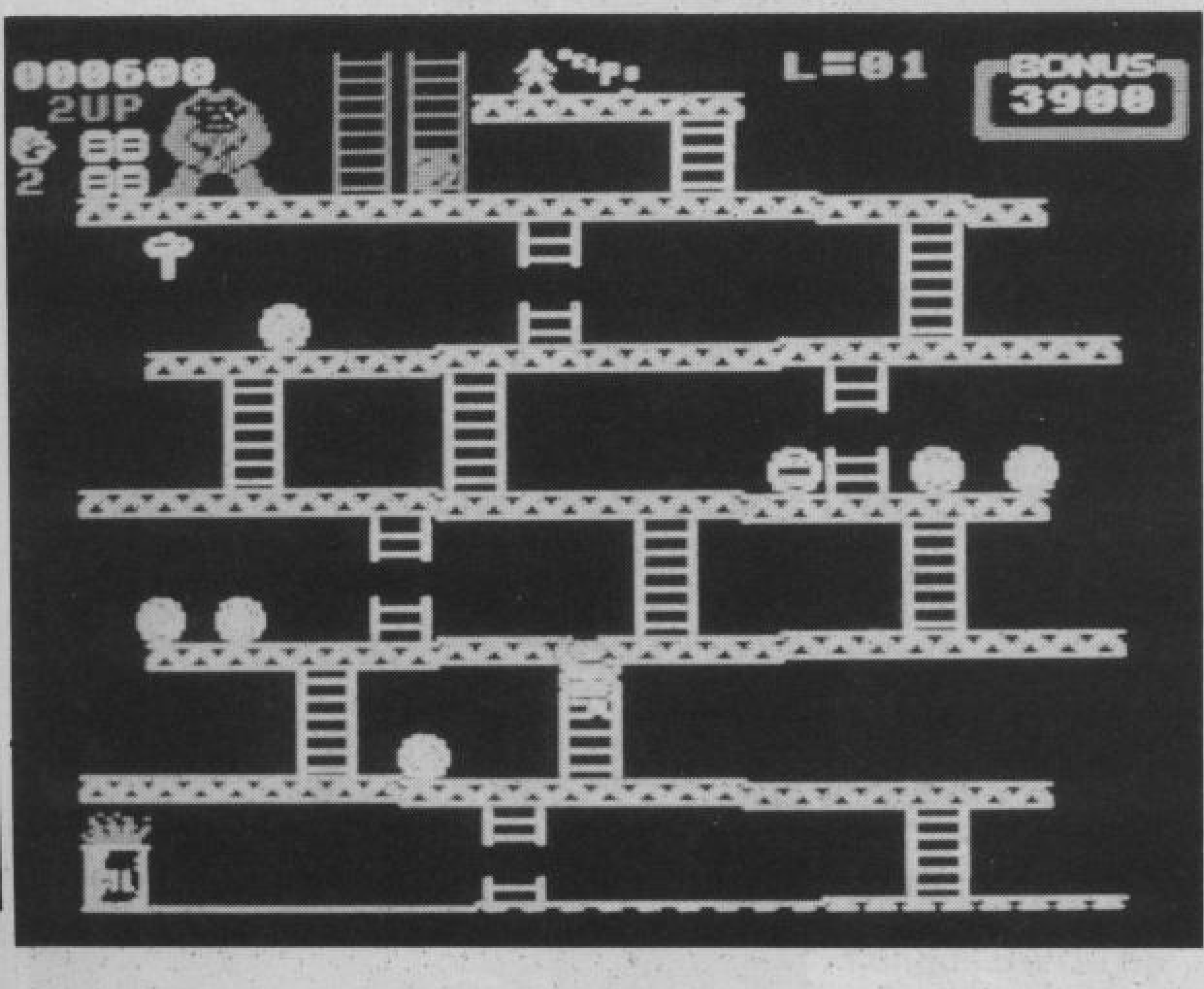
● *"Bit late folks! Is this a licence that* OCEAN haven't used, or do they really think that this will set the software industry alight? I wasn't expecting much from this because the game is very bad and outdated. The graphics are badly drawn and move at a very slow pace. I didn't find anything in Donkey Kong *that made me jump about with excitement. It's not the programmers' fault that the game is bad, it is just that* OCEAN *have released it at least two years too late."*

PAUL

● "This is strange indeed! How come OCEAN are releasing a game like *Donkey Kong*, which is only a souped-up version of their earlier *Kong*? The original was renowned for its bugs, but this one at least seems to be free of them – and I should think so after all this time! Why anyone would want a conversion of an arcade machine that's been around for I don't how many years is a mystery to me, but then again, if you're one of the dedicated followers (there must be one of you, somewhere!) then this is about as close as you're going to get to the original on the Spectrum."

MIKE

Mario climbs to the third girder on his way up level one



COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable; up, down, left, right, jump
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: garish and simple
Graphics: simplistic with unsophisticated animation
Sound: unremarkable tune and effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: four
General rating: A competent conversion of an ancient arcade game

Presentation	82%
Graphics	54%
Playability	53%
Addictive qualities	49%
Value for money	42%
Overall	**48%**

FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR

Producer: Gremlin Graphics
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **The Gremlin Team**

This football strategy/simulation began life as a design for a traditional boardgame offered to GREMLIN some while ago. Now it appears as a computer-only entertainment. You are sweet seventeen and want to be a top footballer. At the start of your career you have £5,000 in cash, 10 'goal cards' and a pair of reasonably talented feet. Your ultimate aim is to become Footballer Of The Year and attend the prestigious award ceremony.

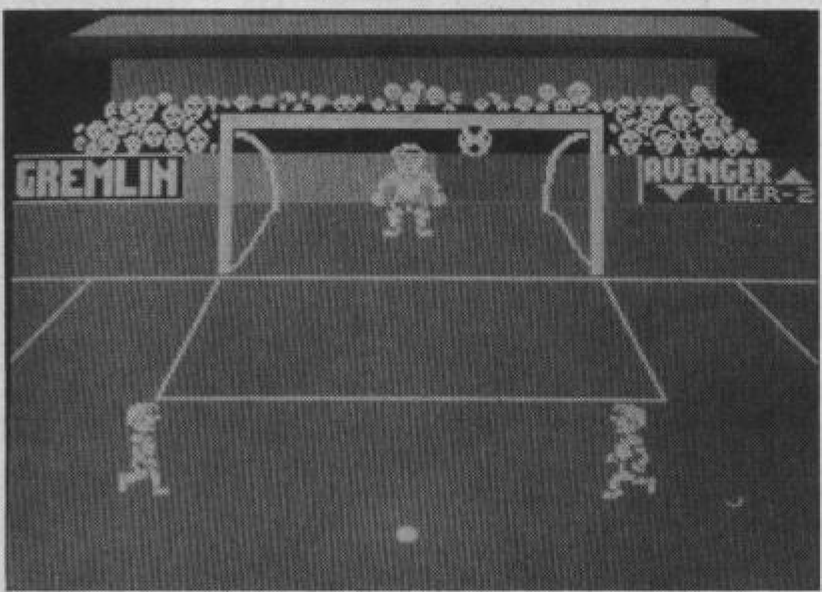
The first decision you make is which Division to play in – there are five skill levels available, represented by the four English Divisions and an international Super League. Goal cards are more expensive in the higher Divisions, and as they are traded for shots at goal, the number of goal cards you can afford has a bearing on your performance as a player.

The game is icon-driven from the main control menu. Accessing the globe icon reveals the performance of the team that is paying your wages – the number of goals scored, the team's morale and progress in the various competitions are revealed. The footballer icon leads to the report on the player's personal achievements: status points, the league played in and weekly earnings are shown on bar charts. A general rating is also given which summarises the footballer's overall skill level. An icon in the form of a scroll enables the player to attempt to gain a transfer, but it costs money to attract the attention of a scout – and a transfer request isn't always successful. Prices range from just £2,000 to £10,000 a go. A question mark icon conceals 'Incident Cards', which cost £200 a time and operate rather like 'Chance' cards in a game of Monopoly – money can be won or lost, transfers obtained and extra goal cards collected by buying a bit of luck (which isn't always good).

If things are going very badly, and the proverbial parrot looks so unwell that recovery is unlikely, the game can be abandoned by selecting the 'injured player' icon. There's also the facility to save a game to tape, via the tape icon, if building a career looks likely to span several long sessions.

The icon in the centre of the control screen – a football boot – leads to the football pitch. Selecting it reveals the player's financial reserves and offers the chance to buy further Goal Cards. The computer chooses the match to be played, and decides the number of shots at goal which the star will get if a Goal Card is cashed in – one, two or three shots are allowed and part of the strategy of the game lies in using the available Goal Cards to best effect.

A mini arcade sequence follows in which the player gets to shoot at the goalmouth after positioning the ball. Sometimes a couple of defenders romp towards the ball, and if a shot isn't taken before they tackle the opportunity is lost. The goalie does his best to save each shot, and once the attempts at goal are over the match ends and a teleprinter types up the result before control returns to the main icon screen.



Well Brian, I just stuck me boot out and there it was, in the back of the net!

From time to time, random events (taken from the selection of incident cards) affect the player's career. As the would-be footballing star improves his skills and earns more money, the financial impact of injuries and other misfortunes is increased – but appearance fees and racecourse winnings increase too.

Early in the game, the player has to choose an international side to play for, and once skill levels have been built up the star footballer is called upon to represent the chosen country in international friendlies – all useful goal-scoring opportunities that might influence the judges at the end of the year!

When the season ends, a report on progress is prepared and teams may be promoted or relegated. Talented players may find a transfer deal . . . Finally, the shortlist of candidates for the ultimate accolade is presented and the judges sit in decision . . Could you become Footballer Of The Year?

CRITICISM

●" This isn't a bad little game at all. Okay, so perhaps it won't appeal to your out-and-out arcade freak, but it certainly isn't dull. Graphically there is nothing here that is eyebrow-raising, but all in all it's quite neat. Icons, charts and the like are all well drawn, and the arcade sequence is adequate. The sound is dull – a tunette at the start and a few minimal effects are all you get. I don't see myself playing this forever, but it'll certainly keep me amused for a couple of lunchtimes. "

BEN

●" *What a strange game* GREMLIN *have come up with here. I can't say that I've seen anything quite like it before, although it's similar to* Football Manager *– without requiring the same thought (if you see what I mean). It is easy to see past the smart exterior of* Footballer Of The Year *– it's really just a lot of cute little sections, none of which are amazingly good or dominant. My favourite section is when you get the chance to shoot at goal – but I soon found even this a little too easy. This is a nice idea but whether you'll find yourself playing it again and again is a different matter – I found it started to get tedious after a while. "*

PAUL

●" This game has some nice screens with colour used well, especially on the menu. The football sequence is not very good – the goalie has not been animated very well and the defenders move in very bad diagonals. The arcade section doesn't require a lot of skill. There's a large element of chance as well as strategy, and skill is needed when it comes to juggling with all the variables and coping with financial decisions. The presentation falls down a bit: screen messages sometimes flash up too quickly to read and the computer bleeps at odd times. Maybe this game will only appeal to the real football fanatic. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q left, W right, P up, L down, SPACE fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: colourful icons, little elsewhere
Graphics: nothing special
Sound: mediocre
Skill levels: five
Screens: seven
General rating: Reasonably good fun, but a little too easy

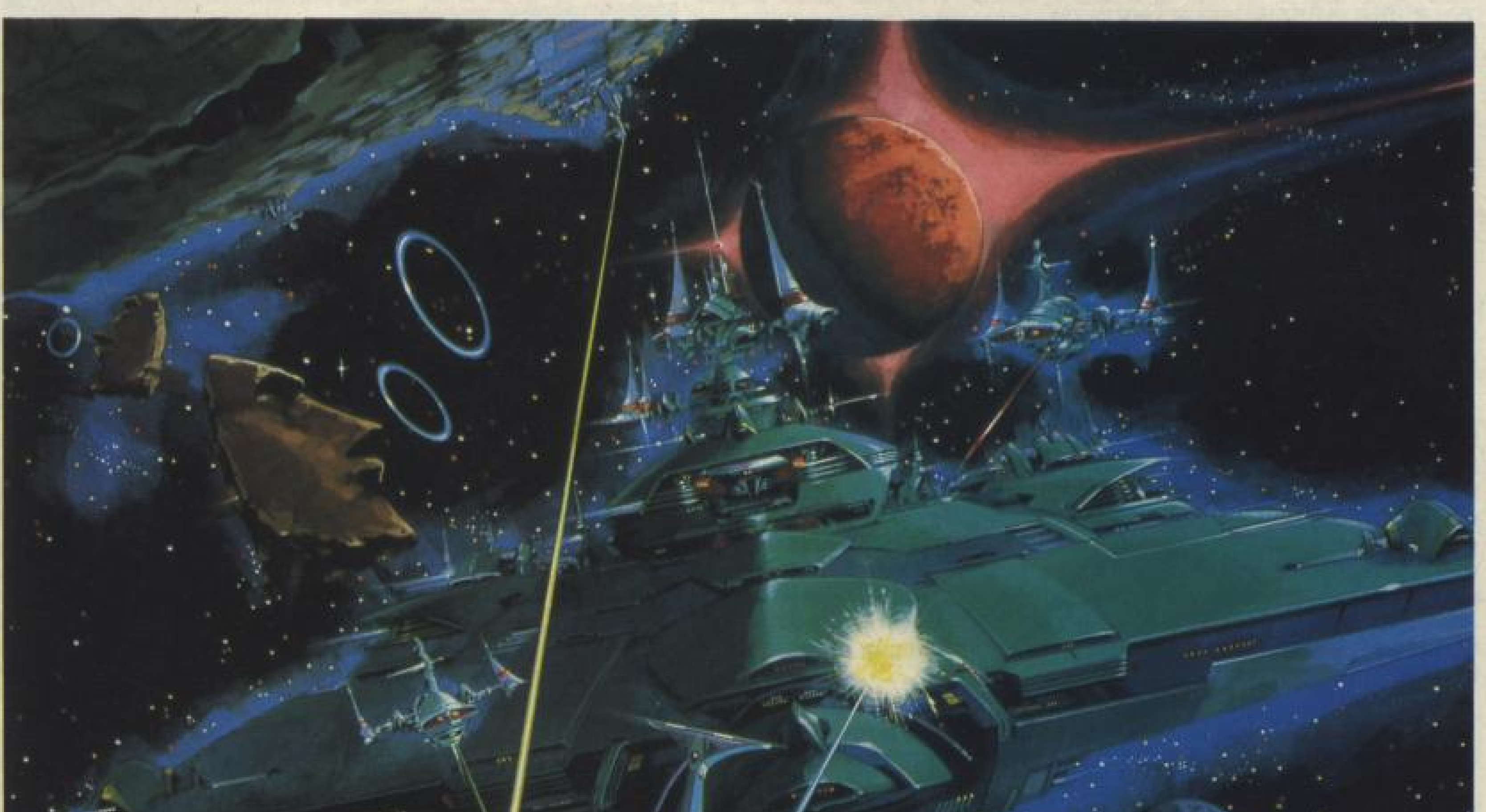
Presentation	69%
Graphics	66%
Playability	73%
Addictive qualities	67%
Value for money	69%
Overall	68%

The main icon-controlled menu screen, where the campaign to become FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR begins in earnest



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Guru Denise has been working the old magic over the Christmas break – she's been slaving away over her hot subscriptions computer while you've been overdosing on Turkey and Mince Pies. She's invoked the power of the MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER once again, and it's back with a vengeance.

Fancy getting your copies of CRASH before your friends who have to trudge down to the shops in all weathers? Well, buy a MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER for £15.00 and Guru D will make sure you get a copy of CRASH every month for twelve months. It'll come through the post tastefully wrapped in a polythene cover which bears your own PERSONALISED Name and Address label, and it should save that tedious journey to the shops every four weeks. Beat your friends to reading CRASH! Amaze them by saying "I got MY copy of CRASH days ago" when they start telling you about the games we've reviewed in the latest issue. Save Shoeleather!

And apart from the twelve consecutive copies of CRASH, Denise will also allow you to pick a couple of the FIREBIRD games that appear on these pages. She'll ask Auntie Aggie to send them to you in their very own Jiffybag the moment she receives your order. Alternatively, you could opt for a heavy-duty black nylon dustcover to keep your computer snug, warm and safe from the ravages of dust, fallout and teastains. It's emblazoned with a tasteful CRASH Logo so everyone knows you read THE RIGHT MAGAZINE! The choice is up to you.

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LIST A



DRUID

A December SMASH in which you explore a multi-level scrolling dungeon dealing with demons, casting spells and collecting extra spell-power from chests. A one or two player game in which the aim is to destroy four evil skulls and thwart the powers of darkness before their evil minions thwart you! Awarded 90% Overall.



HIVE

The latest release from FIREBIRD, written by the team that brought you GYRON. An all-action game that uses vector graphics and puts you in the cockpit of a craft that is flying through the labrynthine corridors of a hive of alien creatures. Your mission: to destroy the alien Queen. Can you survive? Reviewed in this very issue, HIVE collected an overall rating of 78%



THE BEST OF BEYOND

This four-game compilation must rank as one of the most powerful compendiums ever produced. Thrill to the icon-driven action in SHADOWFIRE, then tussle with the Big Bad Zoff again in the sequel, ENIGMA FORCE. Mike Singleton's classic, DOOMDARK's revenge also appears, supported by an audio version of the story. And last, but not least, you get SORDERON'S SHADOW. Hours of entertainment lie ahead of you . . .



HEARTLAND

Another graphically stunning game from FIREBIRD stablemates, ODIN which plunges you into a book where conflict rages between the evil demon Midas and the good people of the Nether World. Beat up the baddies and collect pages of the book – keep the good ones and destroy the bad ones. A SMASH from the August issue, HEARTLAND collected 92% overall.

PTION
S AGAIN!



THRUST

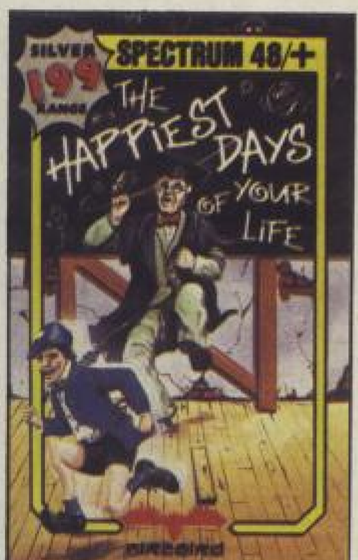
A game that was, no doubt, partly inspired by the arcade classic GRAVITAR. THRUST puts you in command of a scoutship which has to be steered through subterranean caverns on a mission to collect pods of fuel. Pods have to be dragged out to the surface – and both gravity and enemy gun emplacements make life difficult. A neat little game that was awarded 76% Overall.

LIST B



BOMBSCARE

Nasty aliens have planted a massive bomb on a space station that orbits the planet Neptune. It's set to explode in 999 seconds and if it goes up, the space station and the planet will be blasted to smithereens. A filmation-style game in which you control a bomb disposal droid that collected 74% Overall.



THE HAPPIEST DAYS OF YOUR LIFE

Are you one of the people mourning for Wally Week? Fret no more – FIREBIRD programmer Martin Sherlock has captured the spirit and style of the Wally adventures in this romp around a deserted school in which you aim to prove your innocence. Innocence? The headmaster reckons you've been doing a bit of stealing . . . A great game for puzzle-solvers and mappers, rated 64% Overall.



OLLI AND LISSA

An overbearing American plans to ship an ancient castle to the States, lock, stock, barrel and spook. Trouble is, the oldest spook doesn't want to emigrate so it's up to you to collect the ingredients for a spell that will make him invisible so he can scare off the Yankee buyer. The other spooks in the castle want to go on their hols, so they keep getting in your way . . . This platform leaping, arcade adventure won 78% Overall.

DEAR GURU DENISE

I've been everso busy making my mind up and ticking boxes to let you know what I want to do.

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I realise that you have to receive this form before 4th February if my new subscription is to start with Issue 38.

☐ **I'm already an owner of a MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER and it's very healthy. I'd still like to choose two games though, so I've filled in the right bits this form and have made out a cheque/postal order for £6.00 payable to "Newsfield Publications Ltd". My MYSTICAL SUBSCRIBER NUMBER IS:**

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GROUP A ....

GROUP B ....

OR

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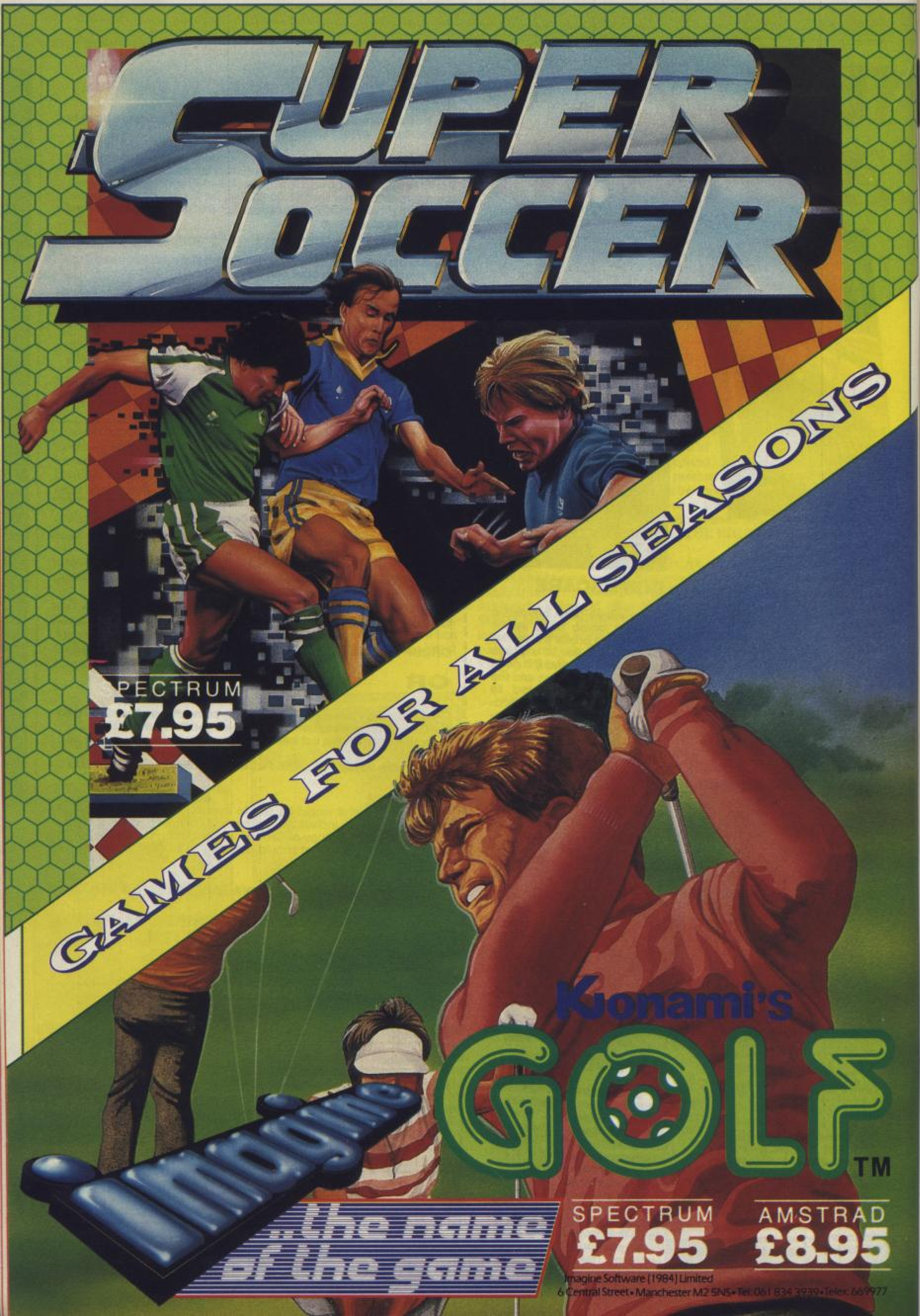
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SUPER CYCLE

Producer: US Gold/Epyx
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Ian Weatherburn**

Super Cycle is the game which gives you the chance to control a finely-tuned 750cc racing machine. In fact you can have your own race track in your front room, as EPYX finally give Spectrum owners the opportunity to compete in the dangerous sport of open road racing without danger to life and limb.

Choose which of the three levels you want to compete at and wait with bated breath for the flag to go down . . . and you're off. Change up through the gears until you reach top speed. Don't be misled by the apparent ease of the first straight – bends appear out of nowhere.

The objective of the game is to race the course and complete it within a specified time limit. Falling off, crashing or having a blow-out wastes time. If the course is completed within the time limit, then it's on to the next track. Fail, and the game is over and it's time to start again.

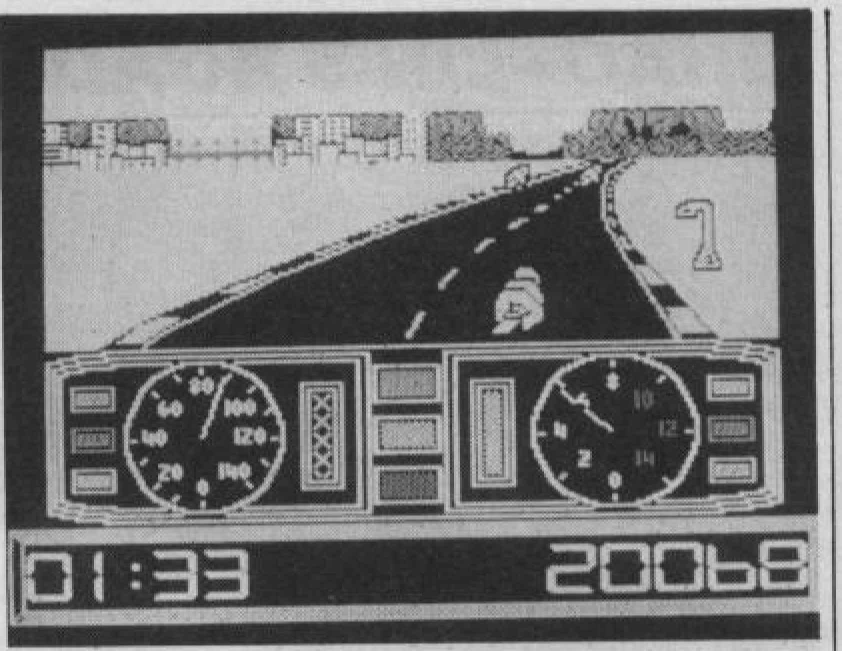
The screen is split between a view of the race track and the instrument panel of the bike. The track shows the road, bits of scenery and the other competitors. The lower half of the display shows the speedometer, rev counter and gears. Three lights in the centre of the display show which gear you're currently in. Pushing forward on the joystick and pressing fire changes up a gear – reverse the process to change down.

As in a real open road race, natural hazards have to be contended with. Other riders sometimes get in your way – they must be avoided or gently bumped out of the way. In the later levels, ice, water, oil-slicks and even lamp posts provide obstacles which must be negotiated if you're to get back to the pits in one piece. Look out for bonus flags which appear on the track, fluttering happily in the wind – hitting one bumps up the score.

The courses don't follow a straight line: tortuous bends can take a rider by surprise, but to help out, road signs indicate which way the road is to turn next and it's then up to the rider to react in time to compensate for the bend.

A high-score table records the good scores of the day. Your rider's score is also displayed on the dashboard throughout the game, along with the time remaining until the end of the race.

If you complete all the courses on a skill level then a chequered flag appears against your score – no-one opens the champagne in your honour though . . .



Vrrrooooooom! Round the corner at breakneck speed – but Cam's going to have to go faster still to catch the two leaders

CRITICISM

● **" I was expecting a really good game from US GOLD here, as Super Cycle on the C64 was absolutely brilliant. Unfortunately it has been badly converted and has lost out considerably. In normal racing games you can see the corners and bends coming up – in this there's an arrow on the side of the road so you know when to turn (tacky isn't it?). The collision detection is abysmal – you can't go anywhere near the barriers without crashing and if you time it right you can zoom straight through the other riders on the track without even wobbling. I couldn't recommend this when there are old bike racing games around at the moment for three quid that put it to shame. "**

BEN



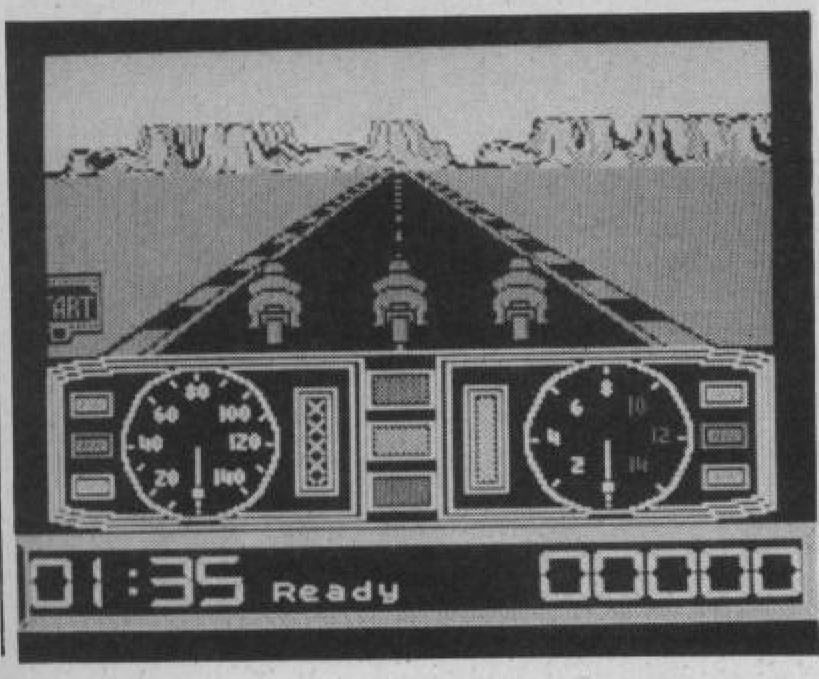
● *" Although at first sight this might seem a well designed game, it isn't. The collision routines are a bit iffy, as are the controls: you can crash into an obstacle when you are nowhere near it, (and drive through other motorbikes) and the bike stops dead sometimes at the start of each race. Most of the races are too easy by far, and the only way that you get killed is by falling asleep while playing – which could quite easily happen. This is not the best racing game that I've played, and definitely not the most realistic. It will sell well, but I don't think it is worth the money. "*

PAUL

● " Oh, wow. The Commodore version (oops, I was told not to mention that) is probably the best race game ever written. The Spectrum version is bad by comparison. In its own right it is reasonable, but it's spoilt by lots of bugs (no gear change round corners, being able to wrap around the screen when cornering, and so on) and the fact that it is far too easy to play. On the OTHER version, you could get a very challenging game on the first level, and run the risk of getting knocked off. On the Spectrum version, I made it easily (ahh, modesty!) through the first half-dozen levels (and more) without falling off once. As far as being sufficiently realistic to warrant insurance, as the advert claims, then that is plainly ridiculous. Overall, *Super Cycle* comes a long way behind the best Spectrum racer, and is not a game I would recommend. "

MIKE

Ready for the off, the three bikers line up alongside each other

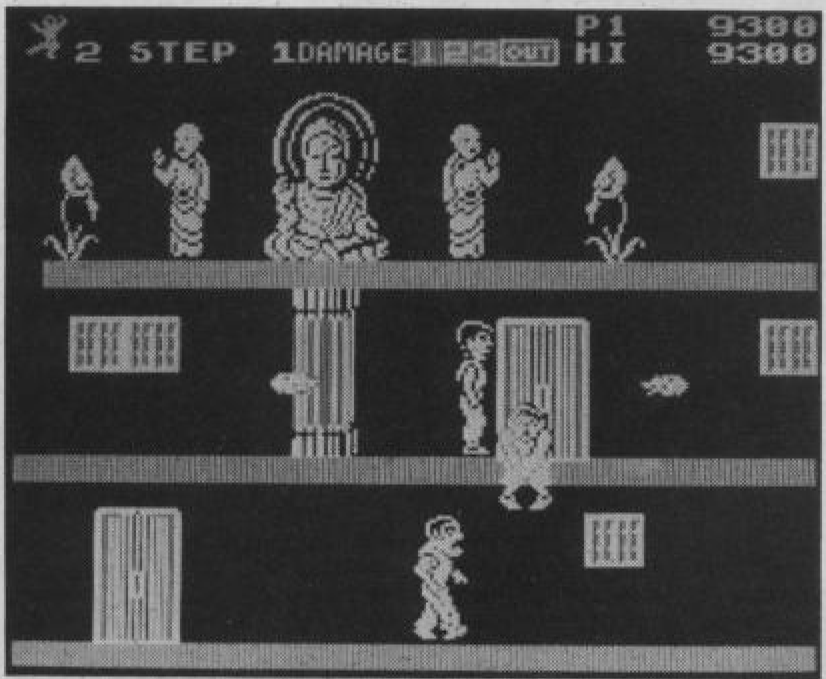


COMMENTS

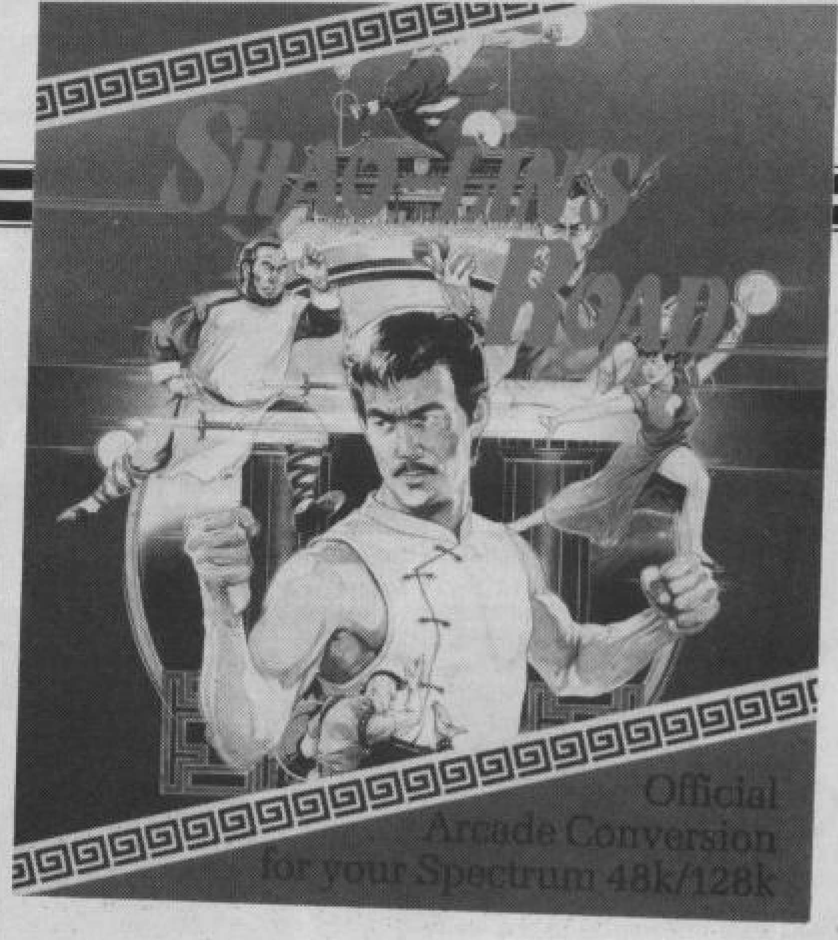
Control keys: Z left, X right, D decelerate, R accelerate, 5 Fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: only two colours on main part of screen, but good nevertheless
Graphics: good, well-defined characters and some good backgrounds
Sound: little more than engine noise
Skill levels: three
Screens: 8 scrolling tracks
General rating: A disappointingly poor racing game

Presentation	82%
Graphics	75%
Playability	64%
Addictive qualities	52%
Value for money	61%
Overall	**63%**

SHAO–LIN'S ROAD



Ha so, Lee has discovered power of magic blinding flash. He really laying into them now



Producer: The Edge
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Mike Leaman**

Shao-Lin's Road is the official conversion of the arcade follow-up to *Yie Ar Kung Fu*. *Yie Ar Kung Fu II* has nothing to do with KONAMI's sequel to *Yie Ar Kung Fu*.

Yie Ar Kung Fu's hero – Lee – has finally mastered the not-so-subtle art of 'Chin's Shao-Lin'. Having completed his studies, he has left to travel the world in search of adventure. And what an adventure he has found! Trapped within a temple crammed full of hostile warriors called Triads, he thanks his shuriken stars that he took the time to perfect his martial art, otherwise he really would be in deep trouble. Using the skills he has learned over the years, Lee kicks and cast spells to rid the temple of his enemies. Only when this task is completed can he leave the temple and continue his journey.

The Temple contains platforms along which Lee's opponents scamper, doing their best to dispose of the intruder. Lee springs from platform to platform delivering his punches and kicks, condemning his foes to oblivion. A damage meter at the top of the screen keeps track of the blows that Lee takes, flicking from 'one' to 'two', then to 'three' and finally to 'out'. Being counted 'out' costs our hero one of his three lives.

Apart from being a bit of an expert with the old 'Chin's Shao-Lin', Lee can also summon magic to help him against the enemy. A magic ball rises from the dead bodies of Lee's vanquished opponents – if he manages to catch a ball, Lee temporarily assumes its magical powers and can use it as a weapon for a while. Magic balls have different uses – for instance large balls can be rolled along and flung out like a yo-yo to tumble the Triads, knocking them off the platforms to their deaths, while flying balls of fire can be shot out along the platform, killing large numbers of the opposition.

Most of the Triads can be despatched with one kick or hit, but on each level there is one Triad who is super mean. Mere hits and kicks have no effect on this guy (or even gal in some of the later levels!). Lee has to wait until he is imbued with suitable magic powers before he can kill off the super baddies. When Lee manages to kill a Super Triad a large bonus is earned.

Ordinary Triads sent to their doom are worth 200 points apiece, and destroying other objects (such as large vases and odd skimmers) also adds to Lee's score. In true arcade style the player's score and the current high-score are displayed at the top of the screen.

CRITICISM

● "Shao-Lin's Road **is yet another arcade conversion that has gone slightly wrong. Okay, so I didn't really like the arcade version, but this does it no justice at all. The graphics leave a lot to be desired: the characters are badly drawn and they tend to jerk around the screen. Also, the backgrounds are a bit complex, causing quite a mess when the characters move around. The sound isn't at all bad – there's a lovely tune on the title screen and a few decent effects scattered throughout the game. However, I'd only buy this if I was really desperate for a beat em up."**

BEN

● "*If this is the follow up to* Yie Ar Kung Fu, *then what is* Yie Ar Kung Fu II *the follow up to? As with all of* THE EDGE*'s products, the graphics are the first things that strike you. The characters are reasonably sized and instantly recognisable. The backgrounds are very well drawn, although I thought the second stage colour scheme could have been better. One minor quibble is that when you finish you have to re-select your control method. Despite this, I found* Shao-Lin's Road *to be a very playable follow up, and I'm sure it should please 'bash and thump' fans.*"

PAUL

● "This is very like *Kai Temple*, but the main difference is that you can almost enjoy playing this one. The graphics are okay(ish), and the title tune is passable. However, as far as playability is concerned it's a wee bit iffy. From what I've seen the original version wasn't much better, but then that's the choice of THE EDGE. I didn't find this game very playable or very addictive."

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable: up, down, left, right, fire
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: lots of colour clash
Graphics: some good detail
Sound: oriental tune at the beginning and spot effects throughout
Skill levels: one
Screens: five
General rating: Official follow up it may be, but this has turned out to be a disappointing sequel to *Yie Ar Kung Fu*

Presentation	77%
Graphics	69%
Playability	68%
Addictive qualities	67%
Value for money	66%
Overall	**67%**

Lee put oriental boot in to hollible opposition at the start of level one



YIE AR KUNG FU II

Producer: Imagine
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Julian Horn**

When IMAGINE bought the licences for a collection of KONAMI games, they acquired rights to some MSX titles which haven't appeared in the arcades, including *Yie Ar Kung Fu II*.

The story follows on from where *Yie Ar Kung Fu* left off. It is twenty years since Lee (the original hero) managed to almost wipe out the Chop Suey Gang. But as fate would have it, one member survived and managed to re-build the empire of evil. This villain now calls himself Yie Gah Emperor, and surrounded by his seven warlords and their retainers, he has spread his evil ways throughout China. Following in the great family tradition, Lee's son – aptly named Lee Young – has vowed to overcome the last member of this nasty gang, and to wipe out everything that Yie Gah Emperor has created.

Lee's father has taught him well in the art of Kung Fu. Lee Young can perform all manner of moves against his opponents, including high and low kicks. He can also move right or left and jump or duck if necessary, and hurl weapons collected during his adventure.

Lee Young also has a few tricks up his sleeve to add to his repertoire of Kung Fu moves. When he destroys a complete formation of midget attackers he is awarded a tea leaf. Five of these tea leaves are enough to make a cup of OO–Long Tea, which injects Lee Young with a new supply of energy, and up to three cups of OO–Long tea can be made and drunk in one game.

Another useful pick-me-up is Lee's Chow Mein Noodle Power. After disposing of an opponent, Lee can hunt for a bowl of Chow Mein. Having eaten, Lee becomes temporarily invincible (the border turns blue to indicate this, and returns to its original colour when the effects have worn off).

Lee Young must fight his way past eight of the Yie Gah Emperor's attendants. A three-screen attack wave of midget nasties precedes a screen containing an Evil Warlord who has to be defeated in un-armed combat before the next section can be attempted. Two bars at the top of the screen are used to display the combatants' energy reserves, or Ki. Ki is reduced when a blow or weapon hits home and if the Ki-meter reaches zero Lee Young loses one of his three lives – extra lives are awarded at 20,000 and 50,000 points.

The game can be played by one or two players. In one-player mode you compete against the computer, which assumes the roles of the Warlords. In competition with a human opponent, you have to decide who is to control Lee Young and who is going to fight with the Warlords before starting a three-bout contest.

Anyone for a cup of tea?

CRITICISM

● " *Yie ar Kung Fu II* **is the worst beat 'em up that I've seen in ages. Many people will buy it for its name, but the game behind the name isn't up to much. The gameplay is extremely tiresome and easy – if you can't get round all the levels on your first couple of goes then I'm afraid it's back to the Gameschool for you! The graphics are poor: badly animated characters and boring backdrops are all you get. There is nothing here that I'd pay money for. Buy it in haste and regret at your leisure! "**

BEN

● " *This doesn't deserve to be* IMAGINE*'s follow-up to* Yie Ar Kung Fu. *The first game was a challenge, but this is very boring and easy to play. It's too easy to get through and involves no thought at all. On my first game I got straight through to level 10 without any hassle from any of the baddies! The main character's animation is very good, but it seems a bit wasted as there isn't much else happening. The use of colour is quite good and the backgrounds add a touch of depth on some levels. But alas, good colour does not make a good game – pull yourself together* IMAGINE. "

PAUL

● " Yawn! This game is severely boring. I clocked the scoreline on my first attempt. I mean, the original was easy, but this is taking things too far. It strikes me that the game does not have an acceptable level of difficulty if I'm able to complete something ridiculous like 17 stages at a first attempt. If IMAGINE have had this play-tested, then there's something seriously wrong with their team; if not – why not? At the usual IMAGINE price, this is very poor value for money. Not a game I would recommend, especially to people who expected a good follow up. "

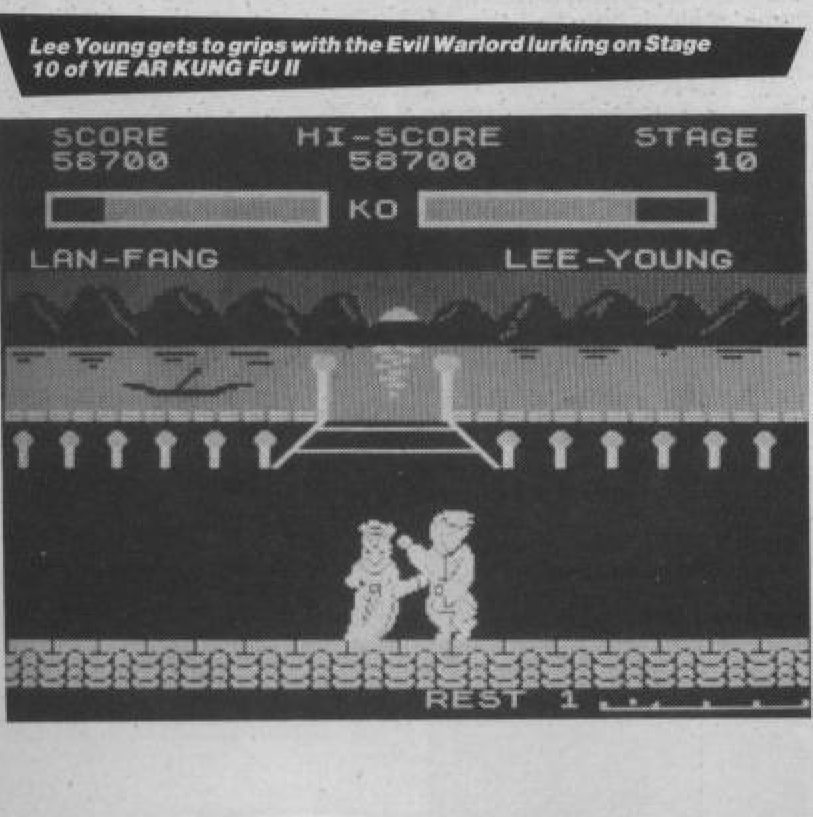
MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: Player One – U up, M down, K right, H left, L fire; Player Two – W up, X down, D right, A left, F fire; P pause, ENTER re-start
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: un-subtle
Graphics: poor characters and scenery, lots of flicker
Sound: occasional spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: 32
General rating: A mediocre attempt at rekindling the beat em up flame

Presentation	72%
Graphics	66%
Playability	57%
Addictive qualities	46%
Value for money	46%
Overall	48%

Lee Young gets to grips with the Evil Warlord lurking on Stage 10 of YIE AR KUNG FU II



ACROJET

Producer: US Gold
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Microprose**

Ever wanted to be a stunt pilot? Well here's your chance, courtesy of MICROPROSE – the simulator specialists. Up 'til now, the company's efforts have been confined to the Commodore, but at last – starting with *Acrojet* – they've begun the process of converting their titles to the Spectrum.

Acrojet contains ten events which can be played by one to four players, and these involve flying a BD5J Acrojet around, through, under and over a series of obstacles. There is also a design-it-yourself section, where two or more opponents can design courses and tasks for each other, and then judge each other's performances.

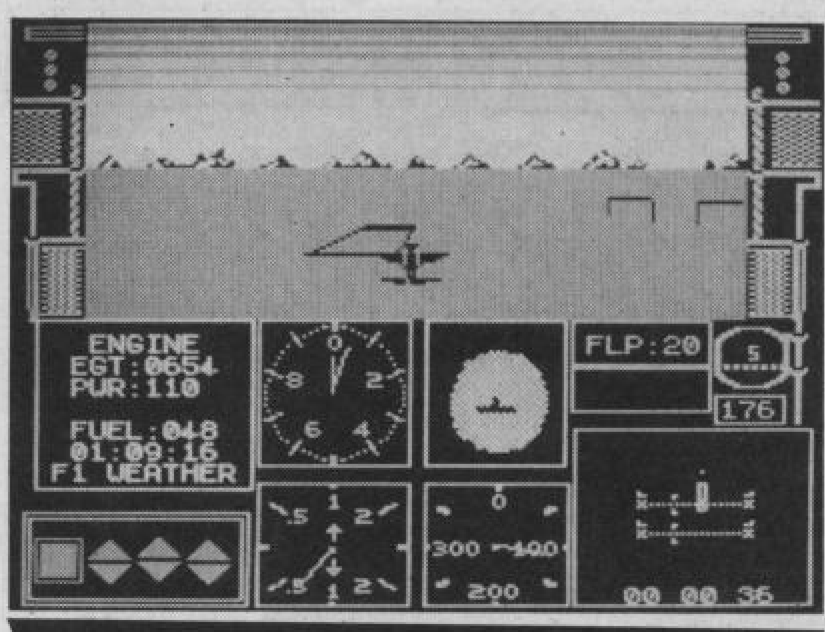
The first event, THE PYLON RACE, consists of racing around four pylons as quickly as possible, and then executing a successful landing. Event two is a SLALOM race which involves the same four pylons, this time flown in a 'figure eight'. The next event is the RIBBON CUT where you use the plane to break two ribbons suspended at 150 feet. After that comes the INVERTED RIBBON CUT – the same stunt flown with the plane inverted. Event five is the RIBBON ROLL: two ribbons are suspended in a row – the aim is to fly under one and then executes a complete roll before going under the next ribbon. That is followed by the UNDER RIBBON RACE: this is a slalom course where three ribbons have to be flown under in sequence. The seventh event is an UNDER RIBBON LOOP: the plane goes under the ribbon, performs a loop, passes over the ribbon inverted, and then descends the back half of the loop to pass under the ribbon again. The next event practices SPOT LANDINGS: the pilot flies up to 2,000 feet, and then lands on the runway as close as possible to a marked spot. This is followed by FLAME-OUT LANDINGS, which is a similar stunt, performed without the use of engines. Finally there's the fancy CUBAN EIGHT: this consists of a half-loop over one ribbon, followed by a half-roll, and another half-loop to go under another ribbon before finally finishing with another half-roll to go under the first ribbon once more.

At the beginning, a pilot can decide on how severe the weather is going to be, and what performance he is likely to get from his jet. Sluggish performance is helpful to beginners, but for the experienced pilot, real-time performance helps with some of the trickier stunts.

The screen gives a 'behind the plane' view of the Acrojet. This shows the jet's bank and climb, as well as giving some indication of height by use of a shadow. The view can be switched to the sides or the rear – useful for lining up the jet with the runway, or for checking that an obstacle has been passed.

An instrument panel below the main view contains a series of read-outs. A compass gives your heading while an altimeter and vertical velocity indicator indicate height and show whether the jet is going up or down. A display shows the event which the jet is performing and reveals the obstacles to be negotiated and the jet's position. An artificial horizon gives the pilot an idea of his attitude, and indicators monitor the status of wheel brakes, air brakes and the undercarriage as well as revealing the amount of flaps in use.

The throttle has settings between 55 and 110 per cent thrust. Engine power above 95 per cent causes the engine to overheat. The engines fail if they run above 650 degrees for too long, or break down immediately if the temperature rises above 700 degrees.



In the ribbon-cut event, a crash is imminent



Banking over the runway, it looks as if Ace Lensperson 'Cameron Pound is about to stall his plane

CRITICISM

● **" I can't really say that** Acrojet **appeals to me; then again flight simulations usually don't unless there is a good bit of blasting involved. The game is technically quite good – the plane is very manoeuvrable, so it is quite easy to complete the first couple of events (once you've waded through the huge instruction page). The graphics are quite a step forward for a flight simulator – you can actually see your plane on screen. This is very good as simulators go, but I'd only recommend it if you are well into this sort of game. "**

BEN

● *" I loved* Acrojet *from the first time that I picked up the joystick. The graphics are fairly simple wire-frame objects, but the way that they react to the realistic movements of your plane is very impressive. The BD5J Acrojet performs beautifully, and is very responsive to frantic joystick movements – as when trying to pull out of loops without hitting the ground. The menu options are easy to use and well presented. I loved* Acrojet *and found it very addictive, although as people seem to be wary of flight simulators I feel that it may not get the success it deserves. "*

PAUL

● " *Acrojet* is a very good simulator. Maybe it doesn't reek of accuracy, but it sure is playable! Some (indeed most!) of this type of game are very boring and unrealistic – or ridiculously accurate and very unplayable. *Acrojet* has a reasonable share of both type's problems and advantages. The graphics are quite good, and the rear view gives a nicer sense of flight than the normal cockpit view. It sounds daft, but there you are! The amount and variety of tasks makes this most addictive. Despite not being very original, *Acrojet* is one of the best flight simulators so far. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: 6 left, 7 right, 8 down, 9 up, 0 fire, Q decrease thrust, with a range of individual keys used to access other functions
Joystick: Interface 2
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: good **Sound:** minimal
Skill levels: four
Screens: ten events
General rating: An entertaining flight simulator, competently produced

Presentation	83%
Graphics	74%
Playability	82%
Addictive qualities	83%
Value for money	79%
Overall	83%


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LLOYD MANGRAM'S FORUM

Another year begins. Quite naturally, people's minds turn to wondering what it will bring – and the letters I received for this month's FORUM reflected this speculation. I'm hoping for better games, a rise, and a more impressive crop of runner beans. I might be able to do something about the beans . . .

TIE-INS LEAD TO STRANGULATION?

Dear Lloyd
Recently the software industry has got itself into a tight spot. Realising the difficulty of producing original games, people have decided to program games based on films, which are often very poor. Still more of the games we buy today are arcade conversions. These games are being made faster than new arcade machines, so the licence fees will go up, leaving less money to spend on developing the game. Companies which don't get the rights will decide they'll do another version, and produce a similar game. Where does this leave us? In a position where most of the boxes on the shelves contain arcade games, films, comics and so on.

Looking away from all the glamour, you see a different box. You don't recognise the title. Oh well, better look in CRASH. Surprise surprise! It's actually different, and it shows! Effort has been spent on the game, by a programmer/team who thought of the idea, and they have produced an excellent game in a different mould. This type of product will nearly always come from a smaller company.

Having said this, all the sales are in the 'seen the film, read the book, heard the music' games and the software houses will pursue this field.

The original games always come from the smaller companies, who do their level best to bring out a game which is different. If more different games and less film games were brought out, the consumer would probably change his attitude.
Stephen Cluck, Nunthorpe, Middlesbrough

***Roy Gibson** of CANVAS is also annoyed by licence deals that take money away from the programming budget – his views were reported in the feature on DENTON DESIGNS in the Christmas Special.*

Without doubt, there have been a significant number of poor games hiding behind famous names – and quite a few are reviewed this issue. But the fact remains that a lot of people DO buy tie-ins, and as far as the software publishers are concerned, spending money on a licence works. Sales are boosted, and if it's an arcade conversion thought doesn't have to go into designing a game and scenario.

Smaller companies, who perhaps can't afford the level of investment required to enter the licensing arena, are still producing original games. Fortunately there's no shortage of programming talent for them to draw on. Generally, if the first consideration in a software publisher's mind is the game, the end product is much better.

And not all tie-ins are rubbish – Top Gun *for instance. the programmers behind* Cobra *also did an excellent job. There's nothing wrong with adding value to a game by acquiring a licence, providing that's the way you go about it. Selling a licence on the inlay and box and 'giving away' a game must, ultimately, harm the industry.*

For your well-placed advice to software houses, I've decided to award you this month's £20 of software.

LM

TAKEN TO THE LIMIT?

Dear Lloyd
Surely now the Spectrum has reached its limits. What advances have been made over the last nine months or so? The best games then were *Tau Ceti*, *Zoids* and *Dynamite Dan*, along with *Sweevos World*. Now what are they?

Lightforce, *Dan Dare* and *Dynamite Dan II*? Virtually nothing has developed in the graphics department. Sure, the colour in *Lightforce* is terrific, but doesn't it slow the gameplay down a teeny weeny bit. *Dan Dare* also has great graphics, but so do *Dynamite Dan* and, *Monty on the Run*, and they're well over a year old.

The sound has also improved a little bit. Back in late '85 early '86 the best music belonged in my opinion to *Starquake* and good old *Dynamite Dan*. Now that accolade belongs to *Ping Pong*, but not by much.
John Logue, Huddersfield, West Yorks

I wonder if you will feel the same at the end of 1987, John. I hope not. There's plenty of room left for improvement in game design, and although the limits of the Spectrum ought to be finite, some programmers seem to manage to push the limits that little bit further with each successive game.

LM

POKEs DEBATE CONTINUES

Dear Lloyd
After reading **Mark Langley**'s letter (Issue 35) in which he defends the publishing of POKEs, I feel I must contribute to this debate.

This first argument was that if we didn't print POKEs Hannah Smith wouldn't have a job. Well, if we didn't shoot people gun-makers would be out of a job but that doesn't make it right.

When a quality game is written, the programmer tries to strike a balance between the game being too easy or too difficult to complete. This means that the player must come across stages in the game when it appears impossible (or at least nearly impossible) to progress any further. It is at times like this when the 'jerk' Mark refers to who has just bought a new game, will be tempted to use the POKE he noticed in CRASH. It is not until he has used the POKE that he realises the game has become too easy and his money has been wasted.

Also spare a thought for the programmer whose game has been ruined by a POKE because it is no longer being played the way he wanted it to be. I'm sure programmers care about such things.

I can see that some people might spend ages stuck in the same position in a game, and I think gameplay tips are acceptable in this case because they can get someone going again without altering the physics of the program. However, I do not think you should print any POKEs in your magazine just to sell a few more copies. Completing a game yourself beats cheating any day.
Richard Yendall, Lichfield, Staffs

I'm sorry Richard, but it's up to the individual to decide whether or not to use a POKE that is printed. I doubt that programmers are all that upset by the POKEs we print – maybe a programmer or two would like to voice opinion?

LM

CHRISTMAS CHEER

Dear Lloyd
Fantastic, informative, nostalgic, colourful, jolly, professional, lively and compulsive. What am I talking about? Oh yes, the CRASH Christmas Special. For two quid, you can't get anything near as good. I still haven't finished reading it. Your LOOKBACK ON 1986 and the TECH NICHE special on little red boxes, were particularly good. A few bum notes though – for instance the DURELL (*Deep Strike*) competition: one picture was upside down (a bit too much Christmas Spirit up in Art I expect) and the CRASH readers awards – why should we put ZZAP! Readers Awards on the envelope?
Jason Pritchard, Belper, Derbyshire

PPS Antidisestablishmentarianism – stick that in LMLWD!!

Glad you liked it Jason. Art has been chastised. It already is.

LM



NICE GRAPHICS, SHAME ABOUT THE GAME

Dear Lloyd
I have just read FORUM in the Christmas Special issue of CRASH and decided finally to put SMITH-CORONA *Enterprise* keys to paper.

I read the letter criticising the CRASH reviews with interest, and I wish to present my point of view. It seems to me that for a game to achieve the much sought after status of CRASH Smash there just have to be signs of effort from the programmer, such as nice graphics, attention to detail in the graphics or plot or accuracy of rules in a simulation. Although these qualities may be desirable in a game, surely it is the contents of the plot and the gameplay that are more important. I would tend to agree with **N Clemons** that a large number of Smashes are not worth the ratings and the hard-earned scarce commodity called money that we spend on them.

This is because after the initial effect created by the nice scenario and the stunning or original graphics has worn off and the humour has worn dry, the actual game that you play is very boring and unoriginal.

I think that you will find that games such as *Football Manager*, despite the stick graphics and the slow basic programming techniques used, the lack of attention to detail and the complete absence of any form of humour at all, are still played and enjoyed by many today. This is because the idea is fun and the game is immensely addictive. I have never played *Head Coach* before, but if it is anything like as addictive as *Football Manager* it should get a favourable review, despite the inaccuracy in the rules and poor graphics.

Most CRASH Smashes today are severe cases of 'Nice graphics, shame about the game', particularly the 3D games which, since *Knight Lore* have never really broken any new ground and have all been very dull and boring despite the vast variety of plots and scenarios and initially different graphics. What we need are games that will not become boring once you have completed them. Games that have satisfied this requirement have been *Football Manager*, the *Midnight* duo, and of the sports simulations I have enjoyed *Match Day* in particular. *Starquake* holds the title of the most compelling arcade adventure on the market.

But that is not all that I can gripe about. I would also like to complain about the other ratings, as well as the overall. Why are they always consistently similar? Take *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* for example. All of the ratings were within 7% of each other. This is the case for most reviews, but what really annoyed me was the 92% for graphics. It did not really deserve more than about 75% in this department. When you compare the graphics to many others around, they are certainly not amongst the best. In a system where the overall is not an average of the other marks there is no excuse for this.

If a game deserves 70% for graphics, 80% for getting started or 75% for value for money whilst getting 96% overall, then the reviewers should award the marks that the game deserves. Despite these criticisms I still believe that the CRASH reviews, if not the reviewers, are the best of any magazine on the market. Keep up the good work.
Jonathon Brooker, Highgate, London

REVIEWS RIGHT!(ish)

Heh! Lloyd
I am writing in response to the **Nick Clemons**' letter in Issue 36 of the not-so-Christmassy edition of this magazine. I completely disagree with him in respect to your reviews always being wrong.

Obviously some people won't like some games, but that is the reason why there are three commentators who can express their own opinion on a game, thus providing the reader with three different opinions.

While we're on the subject of the Nick Clemons letter, I do think a huge mistake was made on Smashing *Winter Games*, which was unattractive and very boring. Otherwise the reviews are good and I compliment the team.
Paul Wicks, Reading, Berks

Elsewhere in this FORUM Mr Clemons gets the chance to refine his argument – it appears it was the reviewers he was aiming his attack at, not the reviews themselves.
LM

SOUNDING OFF

Dear Lloyd
I do not know about you, but I think I am not alone when I say I am sick and tired of hearing 'Oh I really like *Gauntlet* in the arcade'. I think it is rather sinister, in fact, that in many polls taken in computer magazines, one of the more automatic questions like 'What's your favourite TV programme' is often replaced with the question. 'What's your favourite Arcade game', and I'll name names: YOUR SINCLAIR September issue, feature on arcade conversions; YS January issue/Christmas special: Questions asked to people at the October Microfair ('Oh, I like going down the arcade and I like playing *Gauntlet* and so on.')

I think you will find it disturbing that a percentage of all these people may be the sort who stay in the Arcade whenever they can (usually they say: 'Well there's nothing better to do is there?') It is rather pathetic that some young people can find nothing else to do.

If they spend so much time at the 'arcade down the road', you may wonder where they get all their money from. I'll leave it up to you to make your own conclusion to this . . .

If they are addicted to arcade games, then you can bet they will also be addicted to the much more sinister side of the Amusement Arcade, that is the flashing lights and bleeps of the Fruit Machine. I think magazines should do everything they can do against the scourge of the arcades, and its addicts.

I am sure that the reason for this 'Growth' is the arrival of the Arcade Conversion. Many other people will join me saying that most arcade games are very bad indeed, and make no contribution to the advances of games technology whatsoever (two off the top of my head are *Kung-Fu Master* and *Dragons Lair*).

Apart from the quality of some of the ELITE conversions, hardly any arcade conversions are any good. Most of the best game ideas for the Spectrum are made up by software houses and their games designers, not giant corporations, who do not have limits of 48K RAM, 7 colours and sad sound. Probably the best games for a long time have been produced by a company that has avoided licences – TELECOMSOFT. Look at *Elite*, and more recently, the stunning *Star Glider*.

Reviews of the better arcade conversions only serve to encourage gamblers and addicts. By far the worst culprit is C&VG, with its almost grotesque portrayal/glamorising of arcade games, in a special arcade game review section.

Just as a footnote, I think I am right in saying the average reader age of magazines such as CRASH and C&VG is 14/15. Magazines like C&VG conveniently forget that, except in seaside arcades, it is illegal for anyone under 16 to go into an arcade. I think you will agree that arcade addiction should not be encouraged anywhere, whether in your new young peoples' magazine or in any grown-up's magazine or publication. However, coverage of arcade games only appears in magazines with readers of 14 or 15 or younger.
Tom Evans, London

Well, what do other readers feel about the influence of the arcades on the Youth of Today?
LM

SOUNDING OFF

Dear Lloyd
I've got something to say which has been on my mind for some time now. There are so many games released which are very good. Only one thing often lacks: the sound. 'What would you expect from a 48K Spectrum?', I hear you say.

Well, if there are tunes like those from *Ping Pong*, and *Vectron* to name but two, why can't every game have such good tunes?

One moment software houses make excellent tunes, the other moment it's a lot of crap. Why can't they keep up their music-standard? I own a 128K and I can't make tunes like *Ping Pong* even with my sound chip.

And where are the 'Games Music' packages for the 128K machine?

Anyway, I've made a tune/sound FX Top Ten of my software. I think that 1, 2, 3 and 4 are very difficult to beat. The rest is nice and I'm sure there are better ones, but I don't have them. So here it is.

1 Vectron
2 Ping Pong
3 Fairlight
4 Micky
5 Max Headroom
6 Arc of Yesod
7 Knight Rider
8 Equinox
9 Pyracurse
10 Heavy on the Magick

Does anyone disagree with me?
Frank Bouts, Holland

At last Spectrum sound comes into its own with the advent of the Spectrum Plus Two. Considering the limitations posed by the BEEPer, there have been some excellent multi-channel simulations and sound definitely adds to a game. Maybe we should start a Sound Chart for people to add their votes to Frank's?
LM

REAL PLONKERS

Dear Lloyd
I disagree with **R C Fortune** in the Christmas issue. Any game on the Spectrum should be reviewed, no matter how cruel or barbaric it is. Also C&VG are real plonkers if they think the graphics deserve 0. I thought they were very good. They probably condemned the game as soon as they received it as they considered it a terrible thing to do like Mr Fortune did. What about these poor defenceless aliens plodding around a screen when suddenly a lightning bolt shoots up their posterior? (Very painful I'm sure.)

'It's not the same' I hear you cry. Okay then, it isn't but you have boxing and martial arts games in which you punch and kick the hell out of someone. I mean AMERICANA probably didn't mean to offend anyone – they just wanted to bring out a game that pulled in some cash. It's a sports simulation: as simple as that. It isn't meant to be real life, just as many games aren't supposed to be. So RC Fortune, C&VG and anyone else like them just give AMERICANA a break eh!
Elliot Owens, Kidderminster, Worcs

I still don't agree with the 'sport' of bullfighting
LM



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BONE PICKING

Dear Lloyd
I have a very large bone to pick with you. Well, it's not all your fault. But (I'll get straight to the point) for just 32 more pages in the Christmas CRASH you're charging £1.95. Well that's what it seems but it's far too daft. Now, noting that CRASH contains issue 0 of **LM** that is said in the advert to be free with CRASH Christmas Special, it seems very very likely that you are charging people:
1) The normal £1 for CRASH
2) 15p extra for 32 pages more
3) 80p for a so-called 'free' magazine.
One and Two are acceptable, but as far as I am concerned CRASH is getting a little too expensive. Besides, CRASH is a computer magazine – it's not a Youth Magazine. I hope next year's edition at Christmas is much cheaper.
Richard Dobbs, Cleethorpes

The CRASH Christmas Special has become a bit of a tradition – we always try to pack it with competitions and special features as well as providing some form of gift. We ran into a little bit of criticism last year for charging £1.95 for 196 pages – our printers can only cope with a 196 page magazine – so giving away another 80 pages in the form of a completely separate magazine this year seemed like a good idea.
The increased price is for one issue only, but the November and December Issues are also a bit larger. Sorry you felt a bit miffed Richard. What did the rest of you think about the new magazine that bears my initials?
LM

BEMOANING MOANER MOANS

Dear Sir/Siress
I feel compelled to write to you in the light of recent comments made in the FORUM along the lines of 'tell anyone with any complaint that we don't need their comments'. This kind of philosophy is warped to say the least, and those correspondents responsible seem to be unaware of the fact that a forum IS a place for discussion, and that each individual is entitled to his or her point of view. What is more, the readers whose views differ from some of the more controversial ideas which appear on your pages tend only to say 'I think that Valente/Connor (remember him?)/Tony Bridge is a bit of a bastard', and almost invariably fail to support their comments with any convincing or logical arguments.
Or perhaps it is the case that this particular form of moaner doesn't have the vocabulary to express sentiments without resorting to abuse? I trust that this letter will find its way into the FORUM along with the other (mainly) junk that normally gets printed, as having a go at moaners seems to be a currently trendy thing to do. Who knows?
B Andrews, Chessington, rey

I've always maintained that criticism, which may be good or bad, should always be constructive and supported by some degree of logical comment. Abuse on its own may be satisfying to hurl but unless it is backed up by some supporting arguments it is largely without value.
I'm always interested to receive readers' views on life, computers and the whole Spectrum world and do what I can to encourage debate in these pages.
Junk indeed. You see, you've just fallen into your own trap Mr Andrews!
LM

DOUBLEPLUS GOOD

Dear Lloyd
I am pleased to be able to say that I am an owner of the new 128K Plus 2. I would just like to put some people straight about this machine because I get the feeling that you don't want anyone to get it: you almost put me off.
I would like to say that not only does it look good, but also acts it. I know that the rewind on the tape recorder is a bit slow, but it is still the best one that I have had. Also I don't know how you can say that lines go across the colour TV set. If they do I can't see them!
All in all this is the best computer that I have ever had.
Davie Clifford, Telford

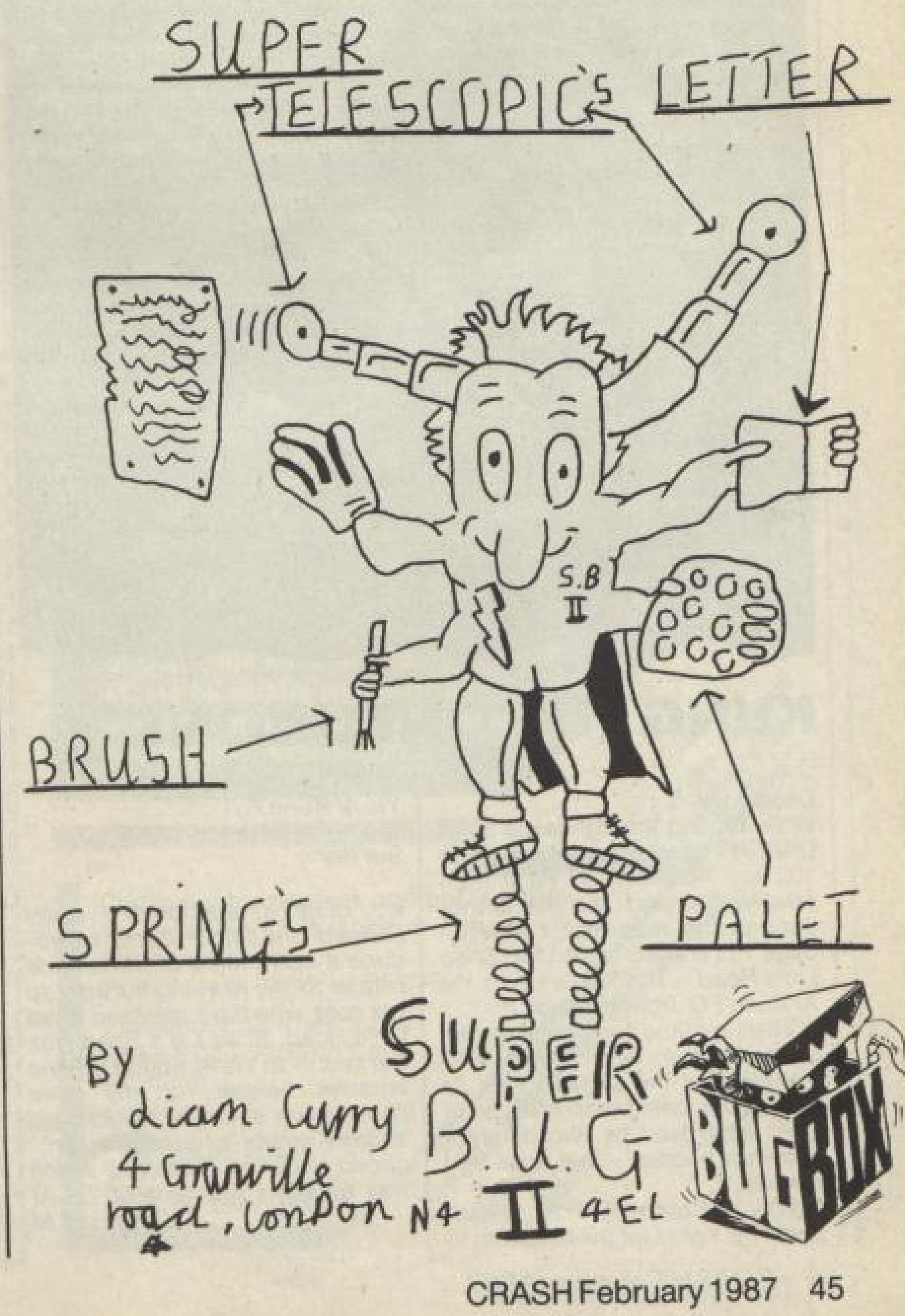
No-one in CRASH Towers has got anything against the Plus Two, Davie. We had a few reservations about it, not least that companies seemed a little reluctant to produce software specifically for the 128 machine. We mentioned that the new Sinclair/Amstrad machine found itself in a bit of a 'chicken and egg situation', with companies waiting to see how well the computer sold before producing games, and people waiting for games to be released before buying the computer. Over the past few months some excellent software for the 128 computer has been released, and apart from a few problems with the on-board datacorder, the Plus Two is looking set for success.
As for the TV problem, as Simon Goodwin explained in his review, the modulator didn't work too well on the very early versions of the machine. This has now been sorted out.
LM

HIGH SPEED SERVICE

Dear Lloyd
I am writing to you, not to complain but to compliment you on your excellent postal service.
On Friday the 14th of November, I received a package from the postman. I hurriedly opened the package to find it contained a CRASH hat and T Shirt. 'What's this?' I said, 'I haven't won a competition!' I opened the letter which accompanied the package and read it.
'Congratulations on being a runner-up in the Adventure Chart feature in CRASH magazine!' it read.
I rushed upstairs and got out the past few editions of CRASH. Just as I thought, my name's not in any of them. I said sadly, 'Must be a mistake,'.
The following day – the 15th – my CRASH arrived – Issue 35 – which comes in several days early, as I am a subscriber. I quickly tore open the thoughtfully sealed bag and turned to the chart pages. There it was: my name. I was a runner-up!
So thank you for the hat and T Shirt. CRASH is the best Spectrum Magazine ever as they deliver the prizes to the competitions before the magazines verifying the results!
Brian Neilson, Petersburn, Airdrie

PS I also won the Christmas questionnaire – the hat you pull the names out of must like me!!!

One or two competition winners in the past may not agree with you Brian – there have been a few moments of panic when prizes got lost on their way to winners or companies lost lists of winners. But we've asked Auntie Julie to take over as Competitions Secretary and she spends all her time chasing people up, solving problems and making sure winners get their prizes. It looks like she's excelled herself in your case. I'll pass your letter of thanks on to her. Reading it will probably make a pleasant change from dealing exclusively with problems . . .
LM





UNFAIR!

Dear LM
I was recently down at the Newsagent's when I saw a SINCLAIR USER. I opened it as I was a bit bored (very bored in fact!) and I saw a review of a game I had been waiting for for months. It was *Space Harrier* and I saw that it got a 5 star SINCLAIR USER CLASSIC. After seeing this I thought WOW! and I eagerly sent off for the game from ELITE. After a couple of weeks the game arrived. I quickly loaded it in to my humble Spectrum and I thought this is the best shoot em up on the Spectrum: I just couldn't believe the speed.

A couple of days later CRASH came through my door. I was just looking through it and I saw a normal review of what looked like a normal game but when I looked closer I saw the words SPACE HARRIER written on the top of the page and the general rating: A near miss. What are you saying? This is the best game out!
Mark Edwards, Redcliffe Bay, Bristol

One or two other people, including Steve Wilcox of ELITE, *thought that the CRASH reviewers had been a bit harsh on Space Harrier. The 'Doc Martened One' has already taken them to task, but they insist that their ratings stand, saying that somehow, there's not that much of a game there. The promise that the game showed when it came in for preview somehow didn't materialise into a game worthy of a SMASH it seems. Reviews are always going to be a matter of opinion – and we're far from infallible. Look at the Match Day controversy for instance.*

What do other people think about our ratings for Space Harrier? Were the CRASH reviewers 'wrong'?

LM

DEALING WITH DELAY

Dear Lloyd
Having read several letters along the lines of the *Streethawk/TT Races saga, I felt that* LEISURE GENIUS *deserve praise for the way they went about advertising their new game Scalextric, for the* Spectrum.

Avidly reading last year's Christmas CRASH (No 24), I noticed on page 116 that there was an advert for LEISURE GENIUS, with a table showing games out, and games due for release (with date shown). Now, being a 'Scalextric' fan, I was keen to discover that the game was due for release on January 22nd 1986.

Unfortunately, the game didn't arrive on the shelves and there were no adverts to be seen in any of the magazines I buy. After three months I gave up hope of hearing anything more about the game and spent the £10.00 on something else.

Reading Issue 35, I turn to PLAYING TIPS and on page 78 I see an advert for *Scalextric* on the Spectrum.

LEISURE GENIUS obviously decided that the original date set for release was a little optimistic. So they stopped advertising a game that didn't exist and concentrated on getting it finished (hopefully to the standard of a SMASH).
Gordon Collins, Lichfield, Staffs

And there's a preview of Scalextric *later on in this very magazine, Gordon.*

It is a refreshing change to see a company hold fire on advertising when a game is obviously going to be significantly delayed – but in most cases involving delayed releases companies probably feel their game is going to suffer a small delay rather than be held up for ages. The temptation to continue advertising until the minor problem is overcome is great, and when another little problem crops up . . .

LM

KUNG FU KONFUSION!

Dear Lloyd
While flicking through Issue 35 of CRASH I saw an advert, on page 102 for *Yie Ar Kung Fu II* from IMAGINE. Carrying on a little further through the magazine I saw on page 123 another advert for '*Shao Lin's Road* – The follow up to *Yie Ar Kung FU*' from THE EDGE.

Feeling a little confused I turned back to the first advert and realised that the sequel to *Yie Ar Kung Fu* is being marketed, or at least advertised by two different software houses – THE EDGE and IMAGINE.

Which Company has KONAMI given the rights for the follow up to *Yie Ar Kung Fu?*
Richard Hawkins, Woking, Surrey

It's quite straightforward really Richard. The official licence to produce a conversion of the arcade sequel to Yie Ar Kung Fu *went to* THE EDGE *who have released* Shao Lin's Road. Shao Lin's Road *was the sequel to* Yie Ar Kung Fu *in the arcades.* IMAGINE, *on the other hand, have effectively published another version of game they produced under their licence, which was for the conversion of* Yie Ar Kung Fu. **LM**

ELMENTARY

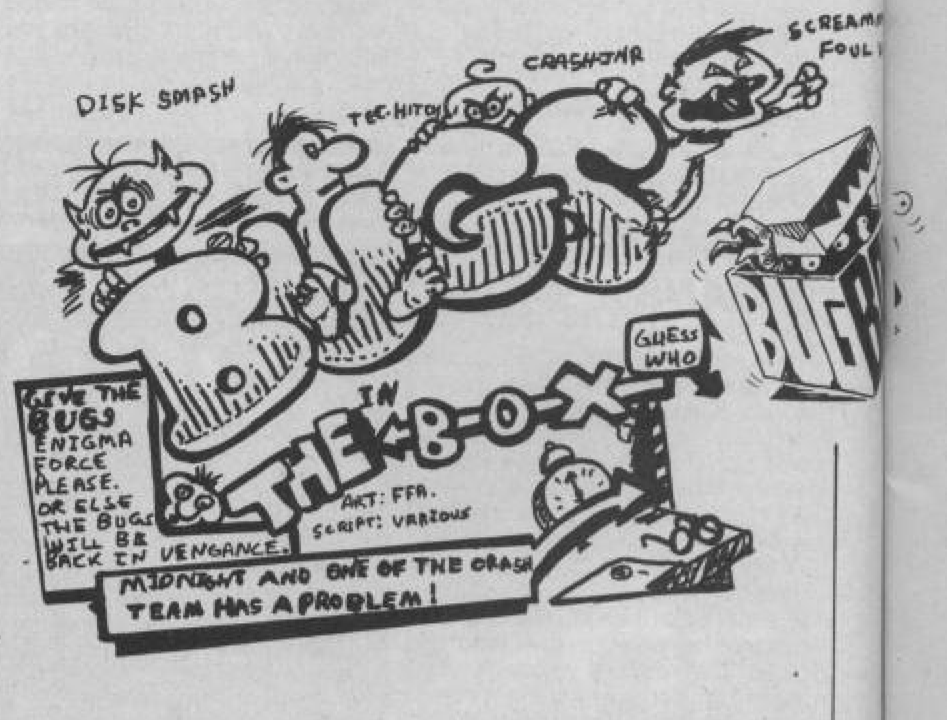
Dear Lloyd
Whilst reading Issue No.35, an alarming thought came to my mind. Please reassure me: is the new magazine **LM** going to be another magazine, and nothing whatsoever to do with CRASH itself, or is it, (I hope not) going to replace CRASH? No more CRASH after Christmas!? Please tell me these are two different magazines.

CRASH has been going for three years now (HAPPY BIRTHDAY), and we, the readers LOVE this name as well as what it represents; it's become a symbol, and we want to keep it as it is: CRASH.
G Thibaudeau, London

I hope you agree that nothing can replace CRASH.

Fear not! **LM** *is a completely separate magazine, put together by a completely separate team, as you should have spotted from the Christmas Special. Well, alright then, I offer a little help and so do Oli and Gordon from 'up in Art', but otherwise they're on their own as far as CRASH is concerned. If you see what I mean . . .*

In case you need any more proof, check your newsagents on 28th January. You should find Issue 1 of **LM** *on sale then, a whole week after this issue of CRASH went (or should that be goes?) on sale.*



MEANING?

Dear Lloyd You really shouldn't be so touchy – or was it just the pressure of the Christmas Special? I'm referring to my letter you printed in the Christmas edition. My comment was just a generalisation when I said the reviews are 'always wrong'. If I thought every single review in every issue was a load of rubbish – which I think you thought – do you really think I would carry on getting the magazine?

Your second critical point was that I 'went on to say that the reviews were very good . . .' I never said the reviews were bad. I said the REVIEWERS are bad. There is a difference. The reviews are very good with detail and comments and plenty of screen shots and so on.

I hope you get the idea?
Nick Clemons, Wolston, Warwickshire

Me, touchy? I still don't think you can make a generalisation which includes the word 'always'.

As of this month you can start directing your comments to individual reviewers – they're admitting to who they are. Maybe you'd like to take up the issue with individual reviewers?

LM

INCORRECT ART

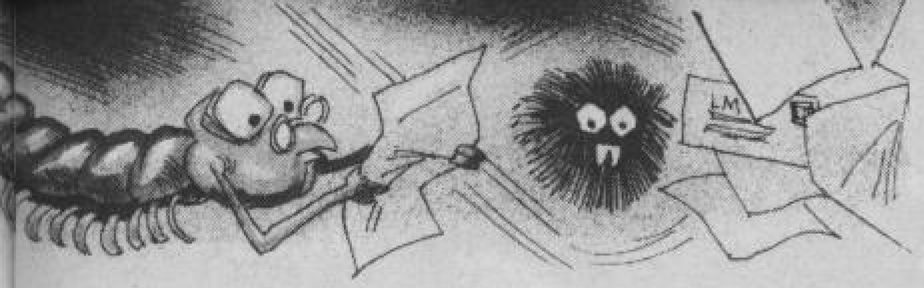
Dear Lloyd
I am not a regular reader of your magazine but I feel I must point out a grave error in your CRASH Competition for *Shao Lin's Road* (Issue 35, December 1986).

The figures depicted in the drawing are not Kung Fu fighters but Karate fighters. They are wearing Karate suits and are performing movements that are more Karate-like than Kung Fu-like.

Is there that much of a difference? Yes, there is a huge difference; Kung-Fu and Karate are definitely not the same art.
Declan Chellar, University College Dublin Shao-lin Club, Dublin

Ah. As a regular reader you might have spotted a far more serious problem in the November Issue – there weren't any differences! But that's all sorted out now. Ian Craig, who drew the pictures, tells me that he wasn't aware that there were significant differences between Shao-Lin and Karate – but then he's not the Martial sort of Artist. Trust that's all cleared up now.

LM



REVIEW RANT

Dear Lloyd
I am writing this letter to you so that you can inform me about your Rating Headings at the end of the reviews. The two headings I ask about are the USE OF COMPUTER and GETTING STARTED.

The earliest issue of CRASH I have is Issue 4 and there it said something like: **USE OF COMPUTER** *how good the keyboard positions are, if they are responsive etc*, but looking in the latest issue of CRASH (Issue 35), I notice that *Dr What* has definable keys, any joystick, and they keys are responsive – it gets 41%. Then look at *Uridium* – no redefinable keys, only Kempston compatible and keyboard play is not too easy, and it gets 89% for USE OF COMPUTER. Why?

GETTING STARTED: in Issue 4 it says, *Are instructions clear, packaging good, and loading good.* Look at *Oblivion* – The game needs hardly any instructions as the game is basic: one reviewer says, "The packaging is excellent" and it only get 56%. Another why?

On a slightly different note, who are your Software Reviewers? And why are there still no indications to who are reviewing the games? Both ZZAP! and AMTIX tell you, so WHY DON'T YOU??

Stephen Coby, Halesworth, Suffolk

As of this month, we do Stephen.

Ben, Paul and Mike are all 'signing' their reviews. You'll also notice that the ratings system has been revamped a little bit – the GETTING STARTED and USE OF COMPUTER ratings (which haven't ever been the major considerations when arriving at an overall rating) are no longer used – the reviewers decided that PRESENTATION was more relevant nowadays. They realised that USE OF COMPUTER and GETTING STARTED percentages weren't being used to the best effect and felt that those two ratings were a bit outdated. In the early days, when the option to define keys was unheard of and keyboard response so variable, they were much more important.

There's a full explanation of the new way of working somewhere around Page 14 of this very Issue.

I still maintain that you can attach too much importance to percentages – it's the written criticisms that really tell you about a game. The percentages are only there as a quick summary of the reviewers' opinions.

LM

THE ASSOCIATED EXAMINING BOARD
for the General Certificate of Education

January Examination, 1987 – Ordinary Level

THE SPECTRUM

THREE questions are to be attempted

1. The Spectrum is an out-dated machine. Discuss.
2. Write notes on the effect of hype in the software business, paying particular interest to licensed software AND advertising.
3. Comment on TWO of the following statements, giving your views:
a) Big business is destroying software creativity
b) POKEs remove all purpose from games software
c) John Minson is a pratt
4. Compare the criticism levelled at 3D Games to the lack of criticism levelled at arcade adventures and platform games.
5. 'Hannah Smith – The only girlie tipster'
How far do you agree with this view?

6. EITHER
With the aid of a sketch compare the layout and presentation of CRASH to any other similar publication.
OR
Giving particular examples, write an account of the cult status achieved by Lloyd Mangram and the letters 'LM', discussing the part they play in modern society.

Robert Burgess, Rotherham, South Yorkshire

Answers should be written legibly in black or blue ink, or preferably typed for ease of reading. The examiner reserves the right to append comment as he feels appropriate, and would encourage candidates for the LETTER OF THE MONTH to create and answer their own questions. Account will be taken of initiative, clarity of expression and neatness of handwriting. Place completed answersheets in an envelope addressed to LLOYD MANGRAM'S FORUM, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.

CRASH COURSE

by Rosetta McLeod



MUSIC TO MY EARS

For this, the first CRASH COURSE of the New Year, I have looked at a mixed bag of educational software. Three music programs landed on my desk, and it is good that this interesting area, enjoyed by both children and adults, is at last being given the attention it deserves by the publishers. The trio of programs, ranging from *Theory of Music* (a formal approach for those studying for music exams) to the lighter but no less valuable, *Note Invaders* and *Pazazz*, should appeal to a wide audience both young and old.

The other programs reviewed this month are aimed at the 7-12 age group, and are representative of the increasingly wide range of software becoming available. From major publishers like HILL MACGIBBON to the smaller KEY SOFTWARE (run by a teacher), the programs cover a whole variety of skills ranging from teaching punctuation, spelling and fractions, to developing the more abstract concepts of logical thought and problem-solving.

Next month I'll be looking at software from Granada Television to accompany their series of programs on *The Micro At Work* – DON'T MISS IT!

COPY CATS/SPELL CATS

Producer: **Key Software, 33 Hilton Street, Aberdeen, AB2 3QT**
Retail price: **£4 cassette, £5.50 Microdrive**
Age range: **primary 3 – secondary remedial**
Author: **Andy Watson**

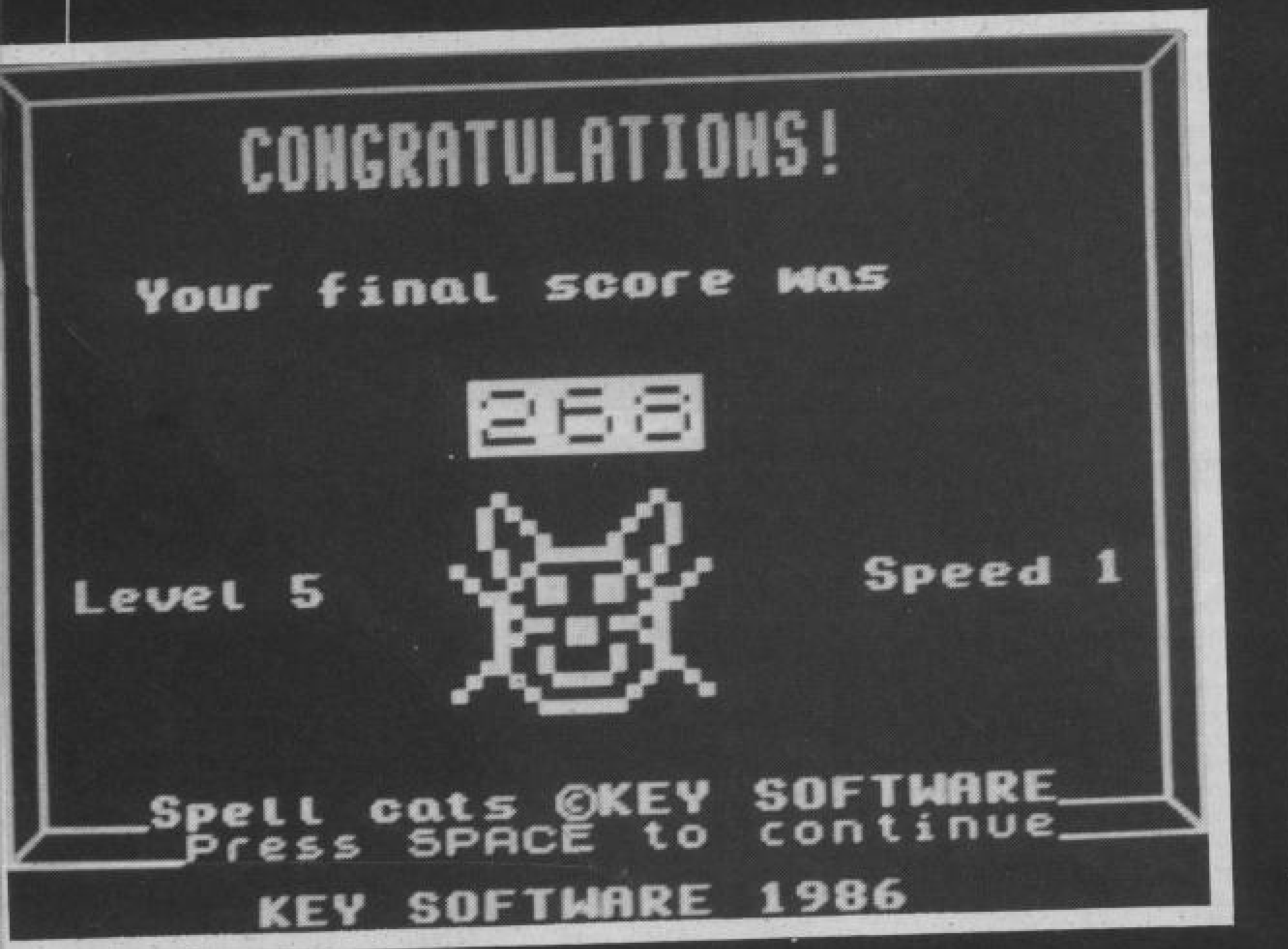
Copy Cats and *Spell Cats* form a pair of programs that can be used to improve a child's ability to recognise and spell common words. The programs make use of the Look – Cover – Write – Check approach advocated by reading specialists, and the words chosen (over 200, used singly and in two and three-word phrases) are taken from **McNally and Murray**'s *Key Words*, and **Edwards and Summers**'s *The Hundred Most Frequent Words*.

Copy Cats displays a word or phrase which the child looks at for as long as is desired. When the player feels able to spell the word, pressing SPACE causes the word to disappear. The correct spelling must then be typed in. There are six levels of difficulty, ranging from simple three-letter words to phrases consisting of three words. Level One, for instance, contains words such as "bad – cat – has – pig – yes", while Level Six asks the child to cope with phrases like "about the house – in the picture – find that woman".

The aim at each level is for the child to achieve twenty correct spellings, but the game ends if three mistakes are made in a row. After twenty correct answers the final score is displayed, and if a printer is attached the score can be printed out.

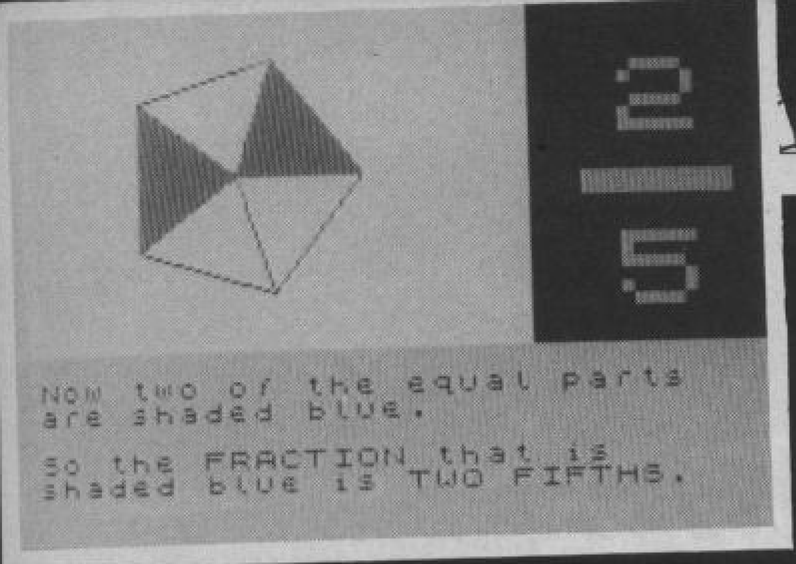
Spell Cats is a similar game, but this time the word or phrase is displayed for a length of time related to the speed chosen. If a wrong answer is given the speed slows slightly, while correct responses have the opposite effect. Quite a high level of competence is required at the fastest level, forcing the child to absorb the whole pattern of the word or phrase rather than splitting it up letter by letter.

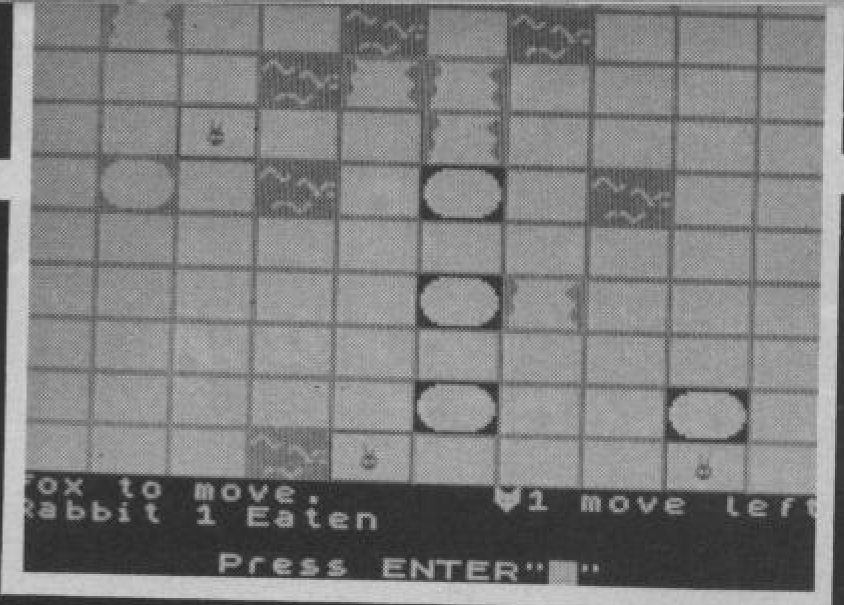
Copy Cats and *Spell Cats* are both attractive little programs, and because speed and start level can be varied, they can be used with children at various levels of competence. Sound can be switched on and off, though it has to be said that the level is so quiet (and the sound itself not particularly interesting), that it contributes little to the appeal of the program. All in all though, these two programs are based on sound educational practice and the accompanying manual clearly lays out the aims and objectives of the package.



COMMENTS

Control keys: all letter keys
Keyboard play: good
Graphics: limited but attractive
Use of colour: effective
General rating: these programs have been written by a teacher with a great deal of experience, and provide excellent value for money





FRACTIONS

Producer: **Key software, 33 Hilton Street, Aberdeen, AB2 3QT**
Retail price: **£4.00 cassette, £5.50 Microdrive**
Age range: **primary 4 – secondary remedial**
Author: **Rod MacAulay**

The title may be rather uninspired, but this program provides a very effective means of teaching both the basic concept of fractions and the way a fraction is represented by numbers. There are actually three short programs on the tape, taking the child through the concept step-by-step.

Bits and Pieces begins by using shapes to demonstrate the idea of a fraction as part of a whole. The screen is laid out with a text window alongside a fractions window, and the moving graphics (showing a whole ball splitting into halves, quarters and so on) are a visually effective teaching aid.

Tops and Bottoms goes on to display this information in terms of numerators and denominators, again using shape to demonstrate the use of numbers to represent fractions.

The last program, *Match Them*, is a nice little game which tests the child on the knowledge gained in the previous programs. The idea is to choose the correct fraction from those displayed to match the pictured shape. There are three levels of difficulty to choose from, and at the end of the game a printout of the score can be obtained.

Fractions is an extremely helpful tool for teaching an important area of mathematics, with colour and large print being used to very good effect.

COMMENTS

Control keys: mainly ENTER and SPACE
Keyboard play: good
Graphics: very good indeed
Use of colour: bright and extremely effective
General rating: an appealing program, very well structured, which brings alive the concept of fractions. Unlike most programs on this topic, which only reinforce knowledge already acquired, this program is a true teaching aid. Definitely value for money.

RUN RABBIT RUN

Producer: **Hill MacGibbon**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Age range: **5–9 years**
Author: **Newman College**

A program in the *Games to Stretch the Mind* series, *Run Rabbit Run* has been designed to promote thinking skills in young children. It can be played by one player against the computer, or by two players against one another.

You can choose how many rabbits you would like (from two to four), and whether you or the computer should control the fox. The screen then shows a ten by ten grid which is the board for the game. White squares represent open ground, blue squares are ponds where animals will drown, green ones are bushes for hiding in, and there are also burrows where the rabbits may hide. The idea is to move the rabbits to their home burrows before the fox catches them. Below the grid, you are told the number of moves that the animal has left: these are chosen by the computer at random – four rabbits have between four and twelve moves, three have between three and nine moves, and two have between two and six moves. The fox always has between three and eight moves.

The accompanying booklet describes all the rules and explains the keys for moving the animals. Number keys 1 to 8 are used, allowing movement horizontally, vertically and diagonally. The game is certainly useful in encouraging skills of predictive reasoning, and the children who tried it out for me thoroughly enjoyed it – once they understood the rules!

COMMENTS

Control keys: number keys move the animals; it would have been easier if a keyboard overlay had been provided
Keyboard play: responsive
Graphics: simple but good
Use of colour: the black border is rather depressing!
General rating: an enjoyable little program which children will come back to again and again

PUNCTUATION PETE

Producer: **Hill-MacGibbon**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Age range: **7–12**
Author: **Five Ways Software**

As a teacher, I know how difficult it can be to teach the conventions of punctuation to young children. And most of the drill and practice programs that I've seen on this topic have not been particularly useful. *Punctuation Pete* however, is different. There are two programs on the cassette. On one side is the punctuation program containing a wide variety of passages for the child to punctuate. The menu offers four levels of difficulty based on the reading levels of the passages, then the child has to choose which type of scribe he is. The passages aimed at the junior scribe require full stops and capital letters; those for the master scribe need quotation marks, question marks and commas, while, if you are a super scribe, you have to insert all the missing punctuation marks.

An example of a passage at junior scribe level is: "soon the train came it was nearly empty anna got in it was her first journey away from home 'your father will meet you at the station at naira,' her father said 'be careful now, anna don't talk to any strangers' the train started suddenly". The child has to move Punctuation Pete along the lines stopping at points where a punctuation mark is missing.

A keyboard overlay placed on the top row of keys gives the option to move Pete left, right, up or down. Capital letters may also be inserted and mistakes deleted. Punctuation marks such as commas, full stops, quotation marks and question marks are inserted using the normal keys. When the child has finished punctuating the passage, Punctuation Pete checks it over and moves to any mistakes he finds. The child has three chances to correct the error before the correct answer is given. When the passage is completely correct, Pete waves and jumps about, and another passage can be attempted.

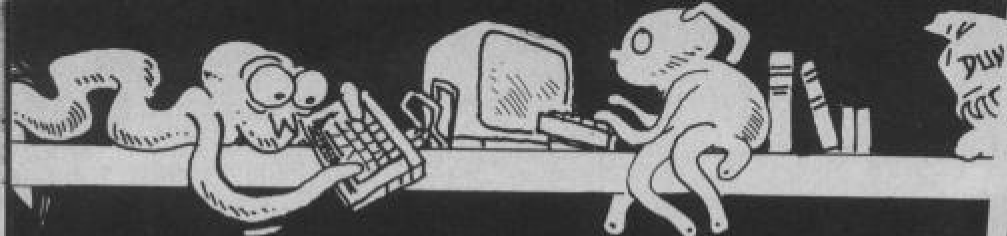
This is a useful program which will motivate children to improve their skills. On the other side of the tape is *Wordfinder*, a kind of thesaurus containing about a thousand words aimed at encouraging children to make links between words. The first screen lists the categories air, water, land, how you move and needs of the traveller under 'Travel' with a downward arrow beside each. Pressing the downward arrow key takes you on to a further list of words and phrases to do with travel. Some words have horizontal arrows beside them and pressing the corresponding arrow key causes the screen to move sideways to another page of connections. Again, a keyboard overlay is provided, and it also offers the options of playing anagrams or hangman.

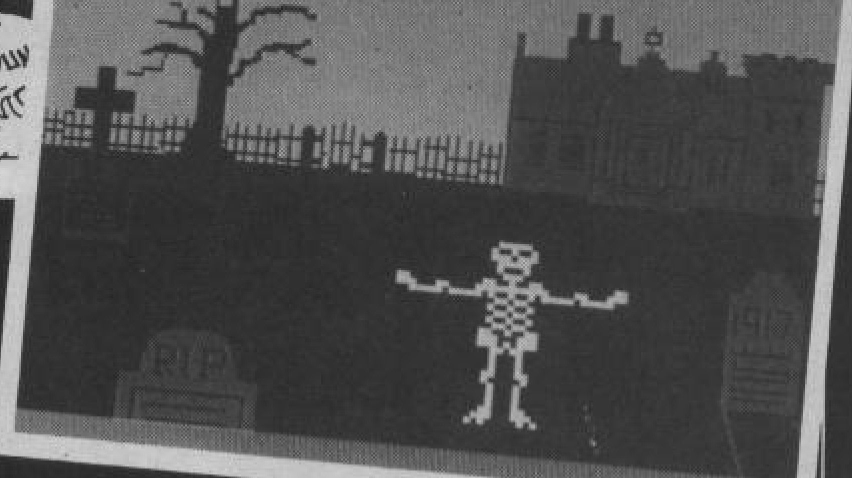
Anagrams uses words from the thesaurus and the child has to rearrange the letters to make the correct word. The player can return to the thesaurus at any point to search for the word, or, by pressing the Help key, can call the word onto the screen. Letters not used in the word to be guessed are shown on the screen as the child suggests them, which is a very useful feature. *Hangman* is a game children love, so they will enjoy this computer version.

Included in the package is a 16 page booklet with information on the history of writing, and the origins of placenames, printing and communications. There are also a variety of tasks for the child to complete, including writing a dialogue, completing a crossword and breaking codes. This is an excellent package, particularly for use in the classroom.

COMMENTS

Control keys: a keyboard overlay for each program simplifies the commands
Keyboard play: good
Graphics: limited to Punctuation Pete and the Hangman graphics, but very good
Use of colour: very good
General rating: a very good package, with an excellent booklet giving ideas for extension work





THEORY OF MUSIC TO GRADE 5

Producer: **Ted Kirk, 33 Humber Crescent, Sutton Leach, St Helens, Merseyside**
Retail price: **£5 cassette, £8 Microdrive**
Age range: **music students, Grade 2 to 5**

There must be a large number of people, both young and old, studying for music exams throughout the country. Although there is software aimed at teaching the rudiments to young children, this is the first I have seen which covers the theory of music for all ages. The set of programs makes little attempt to teach, but instead confines itself to setting and marking a whole range of questions on the foundation knowledge needed for the Associated Board examinations from Grade 2 to Grade 5.

Program one contains three options – Key Signatures and Tonic Triads, Scales, and Intervals. The first of these covers grades 3, 4 and 5, while the other two also offer grade 2. If the pupil does not give the correct answer to a question, the computer simply states that the answer was wrong and doesn't show the correct response. It is possible for the user to escape from a question and move on or return to the menu at any time.

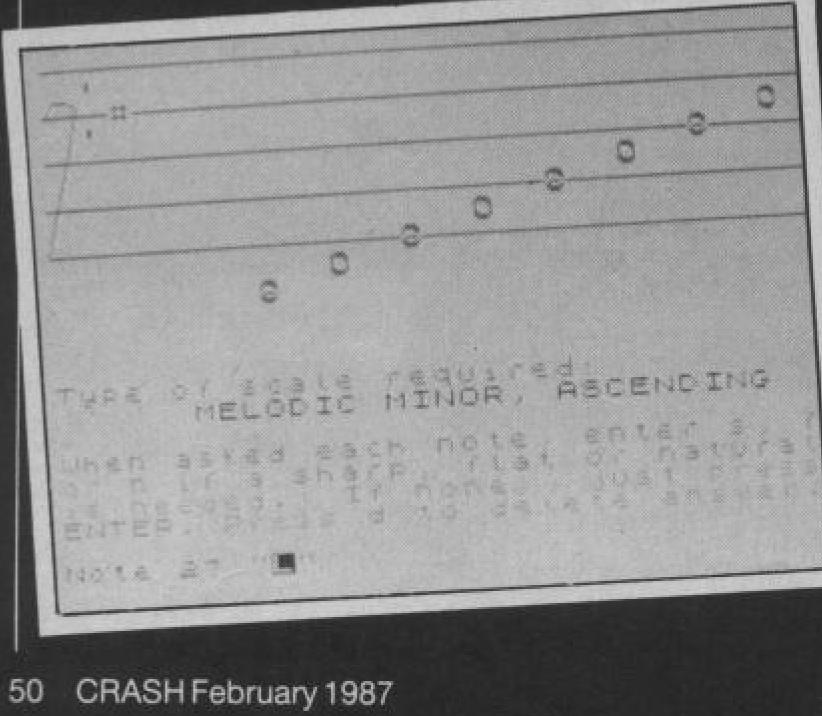
The second program on Time Signatures/Bar Lines and Rests is more suitable for higher than lower grades, as a reasonable command of rhythm is needed. The accompanying booklet apologises for the fact that in the first part of the program the computer's checking can be rather slow, but explains that the longer the process takes, the more likely you are to be right! A straightforward multiple-choice quiz is contained in Program Four – a dictionary of the musical terms tested is included in the booklet. The quiz offers questions on a range of options – Expression, Tempo, Dynamics, Little Words, Performance, and Various Others – so if you don't know your Rallentando from your Pocchettino, this is the program for you!

The final program is aimed at Grade 5 students who, for the exam, have to write a chord laid out on two staves. I particularly liked the error statements which appear in this program, including "This is not going to be right: Let's have a fresh start", and "You are muddling me up: Let's try again"! To my untrained ear, it seemed that the Spectrum's sound capabilities were well used, but Ted Kirk does comment in the booklet that the "simulation of chords in Program Four can only be described as painful."

Having little knowledge of music theory myself, I asked a professional to have a look at this set of programs. He was extremely impressed by the depth of content and commented that, though they might not improve your playing, they'd certainly help you get through the exams.

COMMENTS

Control keys: always clearly explained on the screen
Keyboard play: good
Graphics: very good representation of musical notation
Use of colour: limited, but used in a sensible way
General rating: written by a professional musician, this set of programs is a very useful way of preparing for music exams. I appreciated the sense of humour in the accompanying documentation!



PAZAZZ

Producer: **ASK Software**
Retail price: **£13.00**
Age range: **9+**

Pazazz is a package which allows the user to draw and animate characters on screen, creating appropriate music and backgrounds for the performance. Two cassettes and a comprehensive booklet are included in the pack. The data tape contains four complete performances showing a breakdancer on the street, a clown on the high-wire, a skeleton in a graveyard, and a disco-dancing girl.

Having viewed the demo programs to get a general idea of the possibilities, the user can create a scenario and performance. The EDIT command in the main program contains options allowing you to change the music, the scene, the figure, and the movements, and then to link them all up. There are also facilities for synchronising the movements to the music, for altering colours in the foreground and background of the scene, and for creating quite sophisticated settings. It is possible too, to use existing figures, scenes and music, so you could have a disco-dancing girl in a graveyard!

The creation of the music is probably one of the more interesting options, although the instructions are rather complicated. Once you have recorded a tune, you can then make some changes to it: you can change the rhythm, select a cue or lead-in of a few beats, and set the beat too. At the end the whole performance can be saved onto a blank tape for use at a later date. This is a very complex, but creative package, and younger children would certainly need the help of an adult to follow all the instructions in the booklet.

COMMENTS

Control keys: described both on the screen and in the booklet
Keyboard play: good
Graphics: quite attractive
Use of colour: good
Sound: not as good as in some music programs, but still acceptable
General rating: this is a very different type of program. Once children have mastered the instructions, they should enjoy making their own performances

NOTE INVADERS

Producer: **Chalksoft**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Age range: **anyone learning music or an instrument**

I always like CHALKSOFT's software, and this package keeps up their high standard. *Note Invaders* contains three programs. Side One of the tape holds *Note Invaders*, a version of the shoot 'em down type of game, in which a note travels across the staff and you have to press the correct key for the note (A to G) to release a rocket before the note wipes you out! You can choose to have the notes on the treble or bass clef, and with three levels of difficulty, the game can become fast and furious. The quicker the note is recognised, the more points are scored, and the highest scores are shown on the screen.

The second side of the tape contains two programs, *Staff 1* and *Staff 2*. The first one teaches the basics of reading the staff, and helps the user learn the names of the notes. The clef is explained, together with leger lines, and the old mnemonic "Every Good Boy Deserves Football" is also taught. *Staff 2* provides a test of twenty questions, and notes are shown on screen as a sound is heard. The teacher can choose to set questions on the treble or bass clef, and has the option of using the program with one pupil, or as a repeating test for a number of pupils. During the test, notes appear on the staff, and the pupil must name them correctly. If a question is answered incorrectly, the screen display reverts to the teaching mode, showing the named notes. If desired, the scores may be retained in memory until the teacher calls them up.

This is a really excellent little program which all beginners should enjoy and benefit from. The game in particular, makes the mastering of the basics a fun task and is ideal for young learners.

COMMENTS

Control keys: kept very simple
Keyboard play: very responsive
Graphics: excellent
Use of colour: very effective
Sound: extremely good
General rating: highly recommended

DEREK BREWSTER'S Adventure Trail



BUGSY

Producer: **CRL**
Price: **£7.95**
Authors: **St Brides**

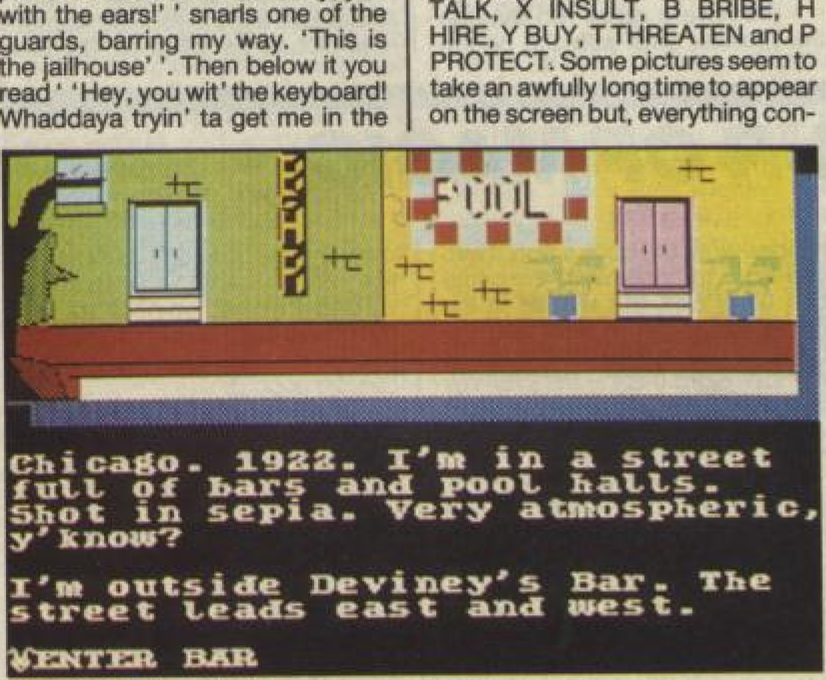
After a couple of months being ahead of the rest I find myself behind once again, reading others' reviews before penning my own. Oddly enough I don't like reading other reviews before writing mine as rather than just cliche you're tempted to look for a new angle, and sometimes there isn't one. This game's about Bugsy Maroon and he's gonna wase'd da whole south side wedda yu like it or not so let's get all the pussy and rabbit footing over with and leave all the cliches where they belong – in the adventure.

Being a ST BRIDES game, that girlie Trixie Trinian (who used to be Jennings before he donned a pink shirt and green knickers) kicks this one off in the common room of the school, writing about her adventures in the *Very Big Caves* in the hope of selling them to a Sunday newspaper. Suddenly the peace and tranquillity of the boarding school ethos is broken by the door bursting open to reveal a real cutey rabbit, about three feet tall, and pale blue, although the depth of blue might well increase if its gunshot wound isn't attended to promptly. The common gregarious burrowing leporid mammal not only walks but talks: 'Da name's Bugsy, Bugsy Maroon. I wanted to take over da Chicago mobs but I blew it. It's all over now. I'm hurt bad. I'm gonna die'.

Now the next bit is a bit zany, but bear with me. The rabbit, despite a never-say-die pep talk from Trixie, still snuffs it, but instead of preparing Fried Rabbit with the girls, the program offers redemption in the way only adventures can and it's a case of 'Do you want to try again'? Now an annoying thing is that every time you get killed in the game (and, by the very nature of the adventure, this is very often) you must go through this common room death scene which becomes a real chore, I can tell you.

Playing the game and reading the descriptions is pretty good fun as there's some real humour lurking at each locality. I tended to prefer the real zany stuff and there is much play on the fact that you are guiding this long-eared bunny around the Chicago streets of the 20's. Take this passage from the jailhouse area of town: ' 'Hey, you with the ears!' ' snarls one of the guards, barring my way. 'This is the jailhouse' '. Then below it you read ' 'Hey, you wit' the keyboard! Whaddaya tryin' ta get me in the jailhouse for?' ' And again with ' 'I am standing outside a theatrical costumier's (betcha didn't know I could say words that long)'. To the north the road goes northwards while to the south it stretches in a southerly direction' (I like the zany bit at the end – more of which in a moment). Entering the shop gives you: ' 'I am inside da thatsoomers . . . I mean da fatricoomiers . . . Aw heck, you already know I can say the words, so shaddup' '. Pure zaniness is this passage taken from the poster at the railway station: 'Come to Chicago where lights are bright, where men are men and women are women. Where horses are horses and dogs are dogs and everything else is pretty much the way you'd expect it to be'.

Bugsy is without doubt an entertaining game with zany humour and a SCORE command which reflects money acquired in the first instance, but later shows your ranking amongst Public Enemies. You can spend a long time wandering around the adventure but you are only really getting somewhere when you get to scan the option screen with the following options on it: G GREET, F SWEET-TALK, X INSULT, B BRIBE, H HIRE, Y BUY, T THREATEN and P PROTECT. Some pictures seem to take an awfully long time to appear on the screen but, everything considered, I think if you liked *Big Cave* and so on, you'll certainly warm to this one.



The giant blue rabbit finds himself downtown, in a street full of bars and poolhalls

COMMENTS

Difficulty: not easy
Graphics: average
Presentation: good
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: slow appearance of graphics
General rating: tries hard to be funny and very often succeeds

Atmosphere	81%
Vocabulary	79%
Logic	85%
Addictive quality	78%
Overall	**84%**

KAYLETH

Producer: **US Gold/ Adventure Soft**
Price: **£9.95**
Author: **Stefan Ufnowski**

I was wandering around the bookshops down town and I thought I might as well get this book along with *Colour of Magic*. After searching my way through just about every **Isaac Asimov** title (and there are quite a few) I gave up, only to discover on getting back home that this game is from the Isaac Asimov science fiction magazine rather than the man himself. My mistake, you might think, but as with all misconceptions something is shown up here – like where is this game coming from? (Man.)

Anyway, wherever it comes from, the story isn't half bad. It relates how the peace-loving and highly advanced Zyroneans had it cushy until this Kayleth arrived to wreak havoc and destruction. The story, by sheer coincidence, has a passing resemblance to a Star Trek episode lovingly repeated by the good old Beeb in November last year (the one where this advanced bunch sit, oblivious, high up in the clouds while the troglodytes in their caves are kept down by an insidious gas from the caves' rock walls). In this game the rare mineral, chromazin, is the desired commodity and Kayleth, employing atomic disemblers and ruthless androids, enslaves the Zyroneans and humbles them with the task of clawing out the subterranean rocks to extract the precious ore he so desperately needs.

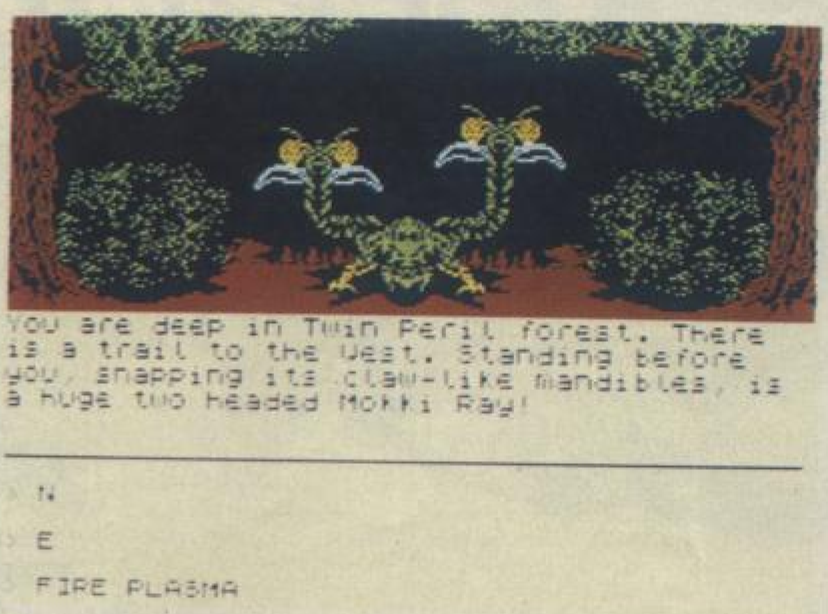
Now, in true sci-fi comic book tradition, there has to be some berk who will put principle above short term acquiescence and, yes you've guessed it, the pillock is the character you hoist around this jolly jaunt of a program. So as to leave you in no doubt as to the enormity of the task you've let yourself in for, the program kicks off with your good self firmly strapped to a conveyor belt which is moving ever closer to a pair of cold, steel claws which rhythmically descend and spew out a



charge of electric blue light. Now I wouldn't worry so much about the claws being cold (you think the robot would have the decency to warm its hands first, really); it's that electric blue light which should have you struggling with your arm restraints. By the way, if you're wondering why your character hasn't a name, well, that's all part of the story – your mind has been emptied by brainwashing, and only playing through the game can cast any light on who you might be.

The feel of the game is highly professional, as you might expect from US GOLD. The loading screen is flashy and constructed in an unusual manner with a number counting down a fast load. At the start an option to preview the game is offered and it would take a will of iron to resist. Revealed are the super graphics and no-nonsense location descriptions, but I'm afraid I really can't get over one major failing with these ADVENTURESOFT games (the last one was *Rebel Planet*, Aug 86 TRAIL) and that is the blinding white background. It's a bit like the advert they used to run about motorists dazzling the guy in front with headlights on full beam. The child in the car asks if daddy was blinded to which he replies, 'no, I wasn't looking'. The same goes for me reviewing these games. To avoid a headache for the rest of the day the brightness on the screen must be turned right down which causes the pictures to disappear. It's a shame not seeing the pictures – but who wants a headache?

I did have a quick run through the preview pics with the brightness up and it seems that a lot of effort has gone into the graphics. Three-stage animation is often seen, as with the huge two headed Mokki Ray in the Twin Peril forest and the ferocious Zemps in the ancient citadel of Zenron. To save memory now and again mirror images are used to form a symmetrical picture but all-in-all, the pictures are always impressive.



The horrendous two-headed Mokki-Ray confronts the nameless hero . . .

Vocabulary-wise the game moves beyond simple verb/noun input with multiple action commands, and commands are separated with a comma or the words AND or THEN. A further refinement uses IT as in GET THE PYXIS AND OPEN IT.

Kayleth follows in the footsteps of *Rebel Planet*. As with that game, this one has a lot to offer the dedicated adventure enthusiast. In addition, science fiction fans may find much of interest in what is a very well-constructed plot.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: not overly difficult
Graphics: good
Presentation: white background is abysmal
Input facility: beyond verb/noun
Response: alright
General rating: good sci-fi jaunt

Atmosphere	88%
Vocabulary	87%
Logic	89%
Addictive quality	81%
Overall	**86%**

THE COLOUR OF MAGIC

Producer: **Piranha**
Price: **£9.95**
Authors: **Delta 4**

Bear with me one moment . . . I'm just looking for a photograph that's been lying around my floor for about eight weeks and it seems such a shame not to mention it after someone went to all the trouble to shoot it and everything. It shows a Mike, a Fergus and a Stephanie with the label, 'LEVEL 9 sign contract with DELTA 4', which sounds the wrong way round, but all seem happy in the photo.

Well, the upshot of it is that this **Fergus McNeil** chappie is popping up just about everywhere, and it's all that his sidekick, **Judith Child**, can do to stop him. I mean to say, I'm sure amongst the folder of info proffered by PIRANHA to go with this game there was one bit that indicated a slight lack of enthusiasm for the *Colour* project on her behalf. Really, Judith, having read about two-thirds of the book to date I can say I think it's an excellent book, one of a kind (whatever that means).

I'll be quite honest here – I had never heard of the book by **Terry Pratchett** called *The Colour of Magic* but a friend who reads WHITE DWARF had, but there again, he's heard about and read just about everything in the science fiction and fantasy fields. Now, if you're reading this review, and you've read the book, and, what, you've played the game as well . . . then what the heck are you reading this for – a second opinion? No, seriously, you've got no idea what the book's about and you want to know what the game can offer. Well, the answer is the game has much to offer and the book is all about the magical number eight (hence the crummy joke at the beginning about eight weeks – oh, you get it now do you (??)?

The chief character in the book, and the one you whisk around the environs of Ankh Morpork and beyond in the game, is a hapless wizard named Rincewind who winces his way through all manner of mishaps and unbelievably bad runs of luck. Take his training as a wizard, where, sneaking a peek at a powerful grimoire he ended up with one of the spells leaping from the pages and lodging in his mind. This curtailed any further studies, meaning he couldn't cast spells like other wizards. It wouldn't be so bad if he had any control over the one spell he does possess, but this isn't so; the spell leaps out of its own accord.

But the magical dabbler isn't a total loss as he is an excellent translator and it is this skill which brings him crashing into the storyline. The big picture has four gargantuan elephants supporting a disc atop the meteor-pocked shell of a turtle by the name of Great A'Tuin. Because the Discworld is supported by this turtle tracking its way across the skies, this gives licence for a joke concerning its Steady Gait crawling or its Big Bang rendezvous (this involving some mating on a cosmological scale, get it).



Now if you're not so sharp with the old memory, forget all the curious creatures in the sky and just consider the Discworld for one moment. There is a long waterfall wisping away at its circumference but more relevant to the game is its makeup which does away with the normal east, west, south movements and replaces them with Hubward, Rimward, Turnwise and Widdershins.

The Hub of the Discworld is never closely warmed by the sun and the islands there are locked in permafrost. The Rim is a region of sunny islands and balmy days. Turnwise and Widdershins are less obvious, but relate to the direction of spin on the Discworld where Widdershins opposes the 800 day spin direction. There are 8 days in a disc week and 8 colours in its light spectrum with the eighth colour being octarine which is a sort of greenish-yellow. . . . purple. Eight is a number of some occult significance and in some places (like the temple of Bel-Shamharoth) shouldn't even be mentioned. Needless to say, Rincewind's room in the Unseen University's Halls of Residence was the unfortunately contrived 7a!

The next piece of geography brings us back to the twin cities of Ankh-Morpork and the plot of the adventure. Ankh-Morpork are the foremost of all the cities bounding the Circle Sea, but even so, few people from the Counterweight Continent on the other side of the Discworld have ever wanted to visit them. None before have been as reckless as the tourist, Twoflower, who in this story lands at the harbour in Morpork and proceeds to throw his considerable



money around. These gold pieces, or Rhinu, are no more than a humble clerk's savings from the Counter Continent but in Ankh-Morpork, whose currency is devalued with copper and silver, these monies represent vast wealth. Were this not enough Twoflower's luggage is made of sapient pearwood, and Rincewind is fully aware that even an Archmage, by dint of great effort over many years, would struggle to fashion a mere staff, never mind a trunk. What is a little un-nerving, however, are the tourist's four eyes and some peculiarities concerning his luggage – like the fact it sprouts many tiny legs to go about its business and can munch a man's arm with its rows of sharp teeth.

Rincewind's first task is to wrest the gullible tourist from the assorted low-lifes around him eager to get their hands on some of those gold-rich Rhinu. Broadman, the owner of the Broken Drum, is already trying to fleece Twoflower of many a Rhinu when Rincewind overhears the commotion from his seat in a dark corner of the tavern. Being a multi-linguist, he eventually identifies the tourist's tongue which leads to the following popping up: 'Rincewind attempted to translate. After trying almost every conceivable tongue (Chimeran, Vanglemesht, Sumtri, even Black Oroogu, a language with no nouns, and only one adjective, which is obscene) he finally, in desperation, mumbled a few words of heathen Trob. The little man's face lit up'.

The Colour of Magic is a super book (a CORGI paperback) and therefore the *Quilled* and *Illustratored* computer game was always going to be something worth playing. But the DELTA 4 team of Judith Child and Fergus McNeil have done a really competent job of coding the concept. The text, like the plot, is very close to the book. The pictures are quite good and the presentation (I particularly liked the full moon which parts to accept your input) is very neat. The game comes in four parts which makes the asking price seem very reasonable. Any money spare should certainly be directed towards purchasing the paperback as without it the game, I'm sure, could appear a little mysterious.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: could prove puzzling without reading the book
Graphics: okay
Presentation: good
Input facility: a little beyond verb/noun
Response: fast
General rating: good

Atmosphere	85%
Vocabulary	84%
Logic	84%
Addictive quality	89%
Overall	**88%**

THE ARCHERS

Producer: **Mosaic**
Price: **£9.95**
Authors: **Level 9**

I'm sorry if my mind strays during this review – you see, I'm trying to listen to the Omnibus Edition of *The Archers* on Radio 4 while writing this stuff here. It's difficult to know how to sum up this program if you're not aware of what it's all about (and if you are aware of what the program's about just what kind of boring fa..fellow are you?).

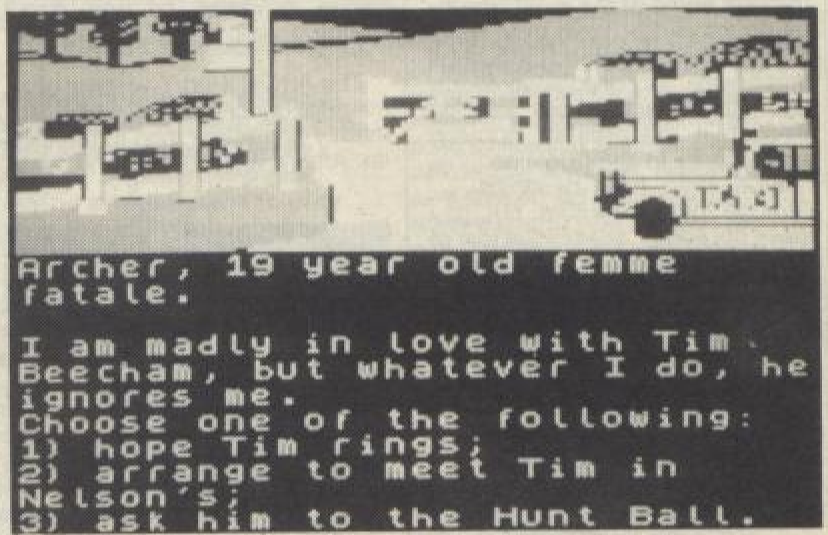
You could think along the lines 'eee, isn't this decadent listening to a load of old rural twaddle that no-one else listens to', a kind of Oxbridge aloofness and 'when does the grouse season end' (or start for that matter)? Alternatively, you could take offence and think 'isn't this just typical of BBC Radio 4, the view of Britain which has Americans take the view that this little island here is a floating comedy museum'. And who could disagree? Since, increasingly, Britain's only future is as a museum all I can say is more power to your elbow and let's have less of this unsettling alternative comedy (only a vehicle for intellectual malcontents) and more of this *Archers* stuff – it's brilliant (and mine's a rural retreat and a fuel-injected turbo grouse).

Wait a minute, I've just got to adjust these cans (headphones to you). Ah, that's better and who the heck's talking now? You see, usually at the start of a scene someone says something really obvious like, 'Ooooh, Aaaaar, here'rr comes that old raaascal, Jooooe Grrruuuundy, he's looking rrraaather miserable, pessimistic, and lazy, and I think he's got a touch of Farmer's Lung' and so you know who's going to speak next, but there's two characters twittering away at the moment and I haven't the foggiest who they are.

As I write this, Ambridge is rocking the establishment with really juicy titbits – like Joe Grundy's American ladyfriend who he's trying to propose to; Sid Perks, the barman and licensee of The Bull is up to the same sort of thing with..er . . . someone else (a schoolteacher, I think), and David Archer is thinking of selling his house, or land, or both, or something.

Hey, wait a minute, what's all this North Ootseera, South Ootseera, I think I've fallen off the end of the Archers into a gale warning and now they're getting stuck into a question from Gardener's Question time (sorry about the spelling of Ootseera, but it doesn't exist alongside Tyne and Dogger and must be a figment of Radio 4's imagination). Well at least I can think straight now without those rural rustics filling my head full of arable silage and food no-one in Europe wants or can afford. I think it's about time we had a long-running series all about everyday shipbuilding folk – or is it too late?

Leaving hobbyhorses in the paddock let's get this one properly introduced. MOSAIC released the more commercial-sounding *Adrian Mole* at the slightly more commercial time of before Christmas last year. In that game you guided Moley around his environs via one of three options, the fourth option offering facilities and help. With *The Archers* you have exactly the same kind of program so if you are familiar with the Mole game and the Archers radio program, you should know what to expect.



Picking up Tim Beecham is all that's on Ms Archer's mind at the moment. . . .

This program could have been terminally dull, as you might suspect, but has been saved by a humorous treatment, good writing, and a concept which I really liked, that of posing as a trainee scriptwriter for the radio programme. The aim of the game is therefore to keep up the audience figures and hope for a record number of listeners, with memos from the Controller of Radio 4 keeping you on the straight and narrow as regards plot lines – people who listen to the Archers are notoriously dull (and the very sort who will be surprised when adverts pop up right in the middle touting for their inherited wealth when everyone else saw it coming a mile off).

As with Mole, the extent that you understand the concept (there it was popularity with peers, here it's getting the balance between tradition and titillation) will govern how successful you are at playing the game. I think the game is much better than the radio programme. Some of you might well say that isn't saying an awful lot and I might be tempted to agree.

A job in the Bull is on offer – what's the best thing to do in order to keep audiences figures nice and high?



COMMENTS

Difficulty: high on playability
Graphics: not as surreal as *Adrian Mole*, pleasantly mainstream
Presentation: super
Input facility: one of three options
Response: immediate with type-ahead
General rating: very good

Atmosphere	**93%**
Vocabulary	**n/a**
Logic	**92%**
Addictive quality	**79%**
Overall	**90%**





DRACULA

Producer: CRL
Price: £9.95
Author: Rod Pike

'Here at last! The coach halts outside the Golden Krone Hotel. It has been a scenic journey if nothing else! Halfway across Europe through some of the most beautiful countryside I have ever seen. But it is a wild untamed landscape that seems only grudgingly to tolerate the coach tracks winding through it like arteries, hurrying weary fares to their destinations, maybe even their destinies . . . Strange that I think that, but, as I leave the coach, the sinister fear of something unknown steals over me . . . Bah! I am acting like a child! I must pull myself together. Here in the Carpathian Mountains, I am a day's journey from my client's abode. But first some rest. East lies the hotel'.

There's a very good reason for showing you the first passage; this game uses one of the most difficult character sets I have ever tried to read, complete with very unattractive small i's for I's. But wait a minute, I'm a fair way into this review and I haven't mentioned its chief selling point which concerns its 15 Certificate – apparently the first computer game to receive such an accolade from the British Board of Censors. There's only one thing wrong here and that's the conspicuous lack of blood and gore in the pictures that would warrant such a certificate.

You begin outside the hotel and a little disagreement has cropped up between yourself and the coachman who has brought you this far. Although he is a rough-looking fellow and is no doubt a villain and a drunkard, he may well have a point in blocking your way and it shouldn't take too much to work out what his grievance is. The next location is the hotel itself and quoting this one will give you some indication of one of the main strengths of the game – its descriptions which read as well as a book:

'I am in the foyer of the hotel. It is a most intriguing place, adorned with the trim and trappings of mountain life. Deer skins hang on the walls in a rather random fashion, mixed with the crafted leather harness and sleigh bells, adding a degree of rustic charm to the scene. An ornate carved pine staircase leads up to the bedrooms above. Through a most picturesque archway to the east lies a dining room, while south leads to the Reception desk. Westward, through a heavily timbered door, lies the road. Flickering oil lamps cast shimmering pools of yellow light around the room, creating dark mysterious corners, corners where evil could hide and quietly fester, unseen until..?'.

It doesn't require too much to find and ring the bell at Reception whereupon a poorly dressed but clean innkeeper, who speaks only pidgin English, appears on the scene and, like everything else you encounter before retiring to bed, he gradually raises more fear, disturbing you in a very fundamental way. In the first game I played I awoke from some pretty wild nightmares to be stabbed by the innkeeper, but on subsequent attempts the innkeeper was kind enough to direct me to the stagecoach outside. The ride in the coach ended up in a mountain ravine, however, so how about skipping over to Part Two or Part Three?

The Arrival, Part Two, tells of an eventful coach journey which ultimately brings our man to the castle. After a night or two and some



long discussions with the Count, he realises that not only is he a prisoner, but his life is in danger. Escape becomes his one obsession. Should he succeed, he vows to write to his friend in England to warn of his discoveries. The castle holds terrors beyond his worst nightmares.

The Hunt, Part Three, sees Doctor Seward, a psychiatrist at an institution for the insane in England, receive a very odd letter from a friend on business abroad. Something about boxes of earth and the 'undead'. Although he fleetingly wonders about his friend's sanity, he resolves to investigate further. He also has problems of his own. An inmate, Renfield, has gone missing and though not considered dangerous, the malignant influence of Dracula is suspected in turning the man's subdued character.

The BBC banning a pop record, quite rightly, resulted in it topping the hit parade. The young have for some time now been fascinated by blood, gore and things that up and go walkabouts in the dead of night. Any marketing man worth his desk top toys knows these facts, but this shouldn't unduly colour your view of this game. The character set takes some deciphering but once understood the game turns out to be well written and a good read.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy first part
Presentation: confusing character set
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: looks *Quill*ed
General rating: spooky

Atmosphere	96%
Vocabulary	85%
Logic	89%
Addictive quality	88%
Overall	**89%**

VERA CRUZ

Dear Derek,
It's long been a dream of mine to have a letter published in CRASH. So I thought I'd stand a good chance if I could just solve an adventure soon after its release. Fair enough, the game in question, *Vera Cruz* by INFOGRAMES, isn't the most puzzling of adventures, but nonetheless it's excellent and very realistic.

In the first part it's very important to scan the whole scene of the crime, particularly to the left of the armchair base and handbag contents. This section will only take you a few minutes to gather all the evidence.

At the start of Part Two you are asked for a list of items discovered on site. Pay attention to the numbers on the pistol and cartridge, and also one of the cigarette stubs. If you found the diary in the first section, make a note of the addresses. They are all relevant to your investigation.

From statements given it is possible to find out who committed the murder, but to do this you must take second statements from two of the suspects.

You can get the name and addresses for your first statement from the diary – Nadine Lafeuille – she won't reveal much, but make a note of it, particularly the nickname. Your second statement should come from the caretaker of the victim's apartment. This time, some information is vital – the first part of a car registration number.

Carry out an autopsy on Vera Cruz.

Gather information from CRRJ LYON on the following: Vera Cruz, Pistol MAC50 No G56743, Fuzzy.

One of the latter should take your investigations elsewhere, when you'll discover the second part of the car registration. Get the name and address of the owner from PREF LYON. The obvious choice for the next statement is this chap. He should be asked for a second statement later on. Correlate the evidence you have with him.

From the nickname given to you by Nadine Lafeuille, you can find the name and some details about him. Ultimately, this leads you to his address where you can take his statement. Also, during this part of the investigation, you come across the name of the car owner's brother. After a bit of deduction, using the matchbox as your source, you'll find him and can take a statement from him. This gives you another lead. Follow it up and get a statement.

By now, you should be close to finding the murderer. By following up leads from information gained via other police stations and squads you should have found out about the jewellery robbery and the theft of the pistol as well as several other snippets of information which may help. A statement from the jeweller himself may provide you with further clues.

Correlate evidence with the car owner's brother, then take second statements from both of them. The car owner's second should sew up the case when you go ahead with the arrest.

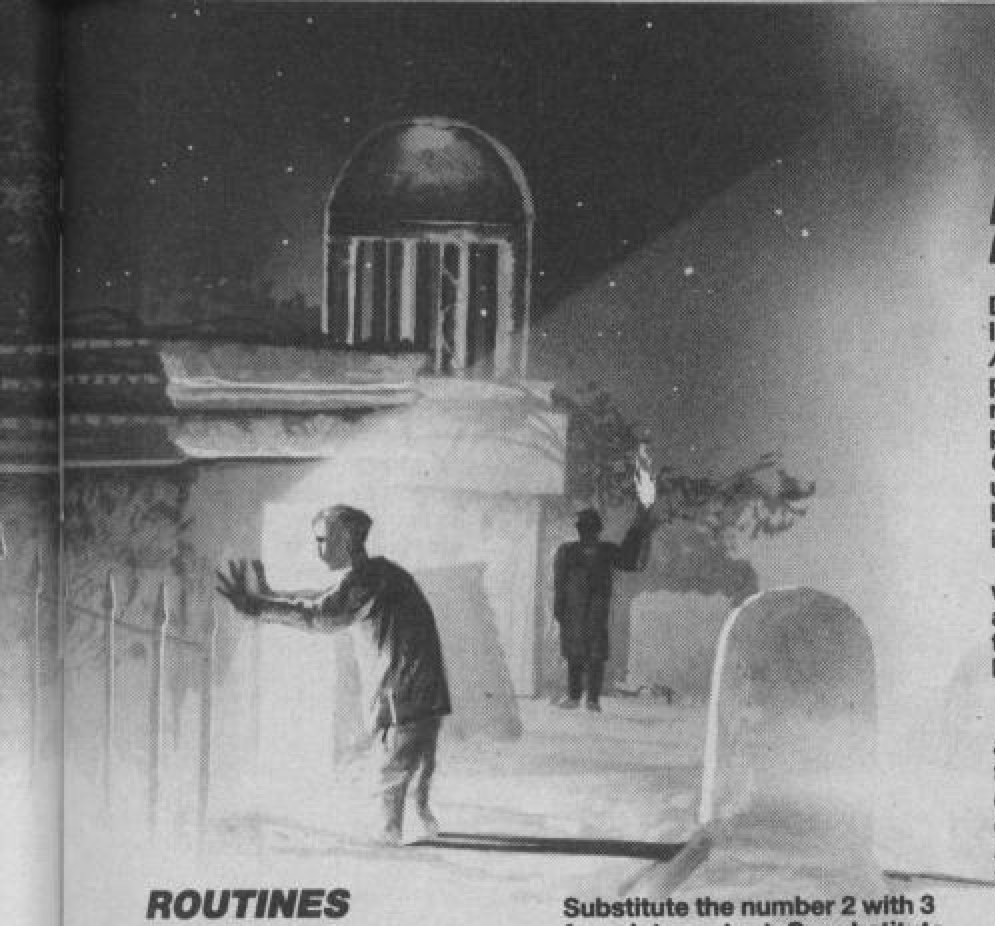
Don Markwick, Eastbourne

S&S BUGS

Dear Derek,
Please find enclosed a *Swords & Sorcery* debugging program. It removes some of the game's worst bugs and allows completion with only two sabatons and one greave. It requires a saved character to act upon, which must be loaded, and a visit to 'centre point' made. The message 'Version 2' will appear after debugging.

```
10 CLEAR 28000
20 RESTORE 200
30 FOR N = 28000 TO 28026 :
READ A : POKE N,A : NEXT N
40 PRINT"LOAD IN VERSION
ONE CHARACTER"
50 GOTO USR 28013
60 RESTORE 300
70 FOR N = 60305 TO 60343 :
READ A : POKE N,A : NEXT N
80 PRINT"START TAPE
RECORDING"
85 PRINT"PRESS A KEY"
90 PAUSE 0 : GOTO USR 28000
100 CLS : PRINT"FINISHED"
110 STOP
200 DATA 62, 255, 221, 33, 0, 234,
17, 15
210 DATA 17, 205, 194, 4, 201, 55,
62, 255
220 DATA 221, 33, 0, 234, 17, 15,
17, 205, 86
230 DATA 5, 201
300 DATA 188, 6, 196, 100, 119,
192, 217, 171
310 DATA 235, 229, 224, 101, 192,
229, 222, 93
320 DATA 10, 229, 100, 119, 192,
229, 105, 116
330 DATA 5, 192, 222, 248, 19, 87,
40, 249
340 DATA 111, 50, 0, 240, 248,
235, 192
```

David Martin, Durham



ROUTINES

Dear Derek,
Further to the letter my friend Finn and I sent on Nov 1 regarding a Brewster-to-English translation program, I have now come up with two small machine code routines to print out the vocabulary of a program. The first one is not that different from the one featured in CRASH November issue, but is shorter and has more features (more follows . . .) The second one is for *Quill*ed adventures and shares the same features:
1 Totally relocatable
2 Can redirect output direct to printer
3 Can output to Microdrive or disc (Beta and Opus known). Any interface supporting streams and channels printing via the A register and the RST 16 instruction.

Quill Routine:

```
10 LET TOT = 0 : FOR N = 23296
TO 23296 + 27 : READ A : LET
TOT = TOT + A : POKE N,A :
NEXT N
20 IF TOT <> 3162 THEN
PRINT"DATA ERROR" : STOP
30 RANDOMIZE USR 23296
40 DATA 62, 2, 205, 1, 22, 33, 192,
93, 86, 62, 255, 146, 254, 128, 48,
5, 254, 32, 56, 1, 21 5, 35, 62, 255,
188, 32, 237, 201
```

Substitute 23296 for any start address.

Substitute the number 2 with 3 for printer output. Or substitute it with the stream you wish to print to. FX 4 and then insert a line 25 so: OPEN 4 ;"M" ; 1 ;"DATA"

NORMAL ROUTINE

```
10 LET TOT = 0 FOR N = 23296
TO 23320 : READ A : LET TOT =
TOT + A : POKE N,A : NEXT N
20 IF TOT <> 2558 THEN
PRINT"DATA ERROR" : STOP
30 RANDOMISE USR 23296
40 DATA 62, 2, 205, 1, 22, 1, 192,
93, 10, 254, 128, 48, 5, 254, 32, 56,
1, 215, 3, 62, 255, 184, 32, 240,
201
```

The difference in the normal routine is:
CHKLOOP
Using BC register instead of HL not using D register but load A register with contents of (HL) Not SUB anything as not necessary as with the *Quill* as here we have the ASCII codes and do not need to convert them.
NOPRINT ROUTINE
INC BC instead of HL and CP B instead of CP H.

I hope you find use for these routines and give my regards to the rest of the team on CRASH. I can help with various adventures and at the moment playing *Colossal Cavern* on the mainframe at work and INFOCOM's *Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* on the office PC.

Dan Schmidt, Denmark

ASSEMBLER LISTING QUILL ROUTINE

```
         ORG  ANY
STREAM   EQU  1601h
         LD   A,2        STREAM TO OUTPUT VIA
         CALL STREAM     OPEN THE CHANNEL
         LD   HL,24000   START ADDRESS TO LIST FROM
CHKLOOP  LD   D,(HL)     I WISHED THAT I HAD A PRINTER
         LD   A,255      HAVE LOADED D WITH CODE TO
                         CHECK
         SUB  D          SO A CAN SUBTCT CONT ADDRESS
         CP   128        CHK UPPER LIMIT ASCII CHARACTER
         JR   NCNOPRINT  IF TOO HIGH GO SUBROUTINE
                         NOPRINT
         CP   32         CHK LOWER LIMIT ASCII CHARACTER
         JR   C?NOPRINT  IF LOWER GO SUBROUTINE NOPRINT
         RST  10h        ELSE RST 16 (OUTPUT VIA CHANNEL)
NOPRINT  INC  HL         NEXT ADDRESS IN MEMORY
         LD   A,255
         CP   H          CHK REACHED TOP MEMORY
```

If any of these routines work after me typing them out well I'm Hans Christian Andersen
DB

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS LETTER

Dear Derek,
I have sent off for the *Graphic Adventure Creator* and will probably have it by the time you read this letter. Throughout the past year I have seen reviews for *Quill*ed games range from awful up to SMASHes. What I would like to know is what you look for in these adventures?

I would be very grateful if you would reply as it would help me and many other writers of these types of adventure to produce better games.

Daniel Donneenemma, Herts

Starting at the beginning, I think a good original and credible story is essential to creating atmosphere and making people want to play the game.

There should be good use of colour to make the screen interesting, and if graphics are included they should remain on screen and should be of high quality. If graphics supply information for the game then all the better.

Text should be of a reasonable length but not so long as to bore the player, I'd say between 4 and 10 lines is optimum. Vocabulary and friendliness is probably the next most important aspect: the player should be allowed to do a lot more than simply what is needed to complete the game. A certain degree of subtle humour should be included as well as comments on some of the sillier actions.

I dislike large numbers of locations with no purpose — devoting memory to problems is far more important. Finally, let the player explore a bit and solve a few problems before the real"stinker". There's nothing worse than spending three hours trying to get out of the first location (especially when you're only one day from the copy deadline).
DB

JUDGE DEARTH

Dear Derek,
Last year I bought *Lord Of The Rings* and its spoof but *Lord* got a SMASH and *Bored* didn't. I found this very strange because the spoof is just as good as *Lord* if not better, and I agree with Richard Hewson and your eminent self on this point. *Lord Of The Rings Part Two* will have to be much better then Part One or Phil Mitchell will loose all of his well-earned reputation for good adventure writing. The first *Lord* has quite a lot of Tolkien atmosphere and is fairly descriptive. Unfortunately the graphic quality of the game is very poor and it would have been better with *Hobbit*-style graphics or none at all.

I have noticed many people who write into SIGNPOST and ask if you have played certain games which have not been reviewed in CRASH. I would like to ask if you have ever played any of the *Lone Wolf* games by ARROW PUBLICATIONS which are based on the *Lone Wolf* adventure books by Joe 'Judge Death' Denver. The games came out a few years ago, and I would like to find someone who has played them so I can find out if they are any good before I buy them. The two I know of are called *Fire on the Water* and *Flight from the Dark*, and there may be a third one called *Ice Halls of Terror*. I think they are only written for the Spectrum 48K and either come with a book or without. I would be very greatful if you could help.

Derek Jenkins, Cardiff

No comment on the first part of your letter — I'm sure I've been there before! But the second part spurred me on to past issues of this illustrious chronicle (CRASH, dimwits) and March 85 in particular where ARROW PUBLICATIONS ***are cited with a FIRE ON THE WATER, £7.95, and from the hands of one Joe Denver and a Gary Chalk.***

It is an interesting review if I have to say so myself with thumb nail sketches of the two authors. FIRE ON THE WATER was Book Two apparently, with FLIGHT FROM THE DARK appearing first and, according to me then, the third was to be THE CAVERNS OF KALTE.

I didn't rate the game highly, but, judging by the marks for that month, I was marking really tough (like 5)! Reading the review (always a better idea than just looking at the mark) it transpires to be a very attractive game and of some interest to those who enjoy D&D Role Route games.

Back in Spring '85 you could buy the software separately from the book but I would like to do is broaden the issue and ask readers how they go about getting old games, as this month I received a letter which claimed difficulty in obtaining such a major and recent release as SUBSUNK!
DB

DROP ALL

Dear Derek,
After reading Mr McGregor's letter in the December Issue asking for a get/drop all routine I have the answer as follows:- IF (VERB TAKE) AND NOUN (ALL) AND HERE (OBJECT NUMBER 2) MESS (YOU TAKE IT) GET (OBJECT NUMBER 2) END. Drop all is the same only you replace GET with DROP. However, if you have 150 or so objects you will need to define 150 low priority lines, which could waste a lot of memory. Unless you only have a few objects in my opinion it is better to omit the get/drop all command.

James Baldock

Eh, yes, thanks James (I think)
DB

This month's £20 letter prize goes to Don Markwick ***of Sussex for his impeccable French.***

SIGN STUMPS



Questions this month cover the entire history of adventuring. It's nice to see that the old classics like THE HOBBIT and TERRORMOLINOS are still popular.

Jason Emery of Lewes, East Sussex asks:

"Please, please, please could you do one or all of the following concerning MELBOURNE HOUSE's excellent game *The Hobbit*:
1) Tell me how to get out of the goblins' area (not just the dungeon)
2) Where do I meet Gollum?
3) How do I escape from the elves' cellar?
4) How do I see in the dark?"

I don't appear to have a map of the goblins' caves but you could try the following method of finding the ring, supplied by David Cooke from Leeds.

Wait until the nasty goblin enters the cave with the crack, then GO DOWN, NE, SE, E, TAKE RING, WEAR RING (type in wear ring after each direction entered), N, S, W, SW, N, W, N, D, E, OPEN CRACK, U, S, E. With the ring you will be able to wander around the caves without being thrown in the dungeon.

On to the other questions, Gollum is in the goblin caves. To escape from the elves' cellar you should wear the ring and then climb into a barrel and wait to be thrown into the river.

Finally, the sword produces light to see in the dark.

Steve Martin from Dumbarton is having trouble with a later MELBOURNE HOUSE adventure and writes:

"In *Terrormolinos*, I followed your instructions last issue but I cannot find out how to put the clothes and so on in the suitcase. Also how do you get Doreen to follow you and how do you enter the taxi?"

I don't think it's necessary to pack the suitcase, having it is enough. To get Doreen, CALL DOREEN and to enter the taxi, HIRE TAXI.

REBEL PLANET is causing problems for **David Holder** from Stockport who writes:

"I am stuck at the beginning of *Rebel Planet*, as I can't find the card, or fix the scooter or open any of the containers. Not having the card means I die after about 10 minutes through lack of protein."

To get the Access card go south from the start and press the button for the cargo hold, then TAKE VALET to be given the card. The scooter can't be fixed and plays no part in the game.

Richard Allen of Blaenavan, Gwent, is having difficulty with a couple of adventures and asks:

"In *Quest For The Holy Grail* how do I get past the Knight who says Nic?
How do I use the Holy Hand grenade and where?
What is the book of Phamaic Phrases for?
In *Eye Of Bain*, how do I get past the skeleton in the crypt?"

To pass the knight you must GIVE SHRUBBERY (haven't you seen the film?). To use the grenade LOB GRENADE AT RABBIT. I haven't a clue what the book is for, maybe someone will write in and let me know! To pass the skeleton in EYE OF BAIN simply SHOW CROSS.

Also stuck on two games is **S. Jones** of Chester-le-Street who asks:

"*The Hulk*
How do you get out of the dome, past the high gravity field at the start of the game?
Velnor's Lair
I've crossed the Lava Chasm and killed the giants, but the border goes black and I die through lack of energy – How can I re-energise?"

I think the following will work: PUSH (maybe PRESS) BUTTON, BITE LIP, OUT. In VELNOR, sounds to me like you are dying from the effects of rat bites: best solution is to either kill the rats or feed them with apples. Wounds can be healed by entering the magic pool, through the narrow crack. You will first need a telescope to read the magic word.

Keith Tomlinson is one of many having difficulty concluding GREMLINS and writes:

"I have blown up the department store but Stripe always gets away and finds water. I have emptied the swimming pool but still he finds water."

After the explosion follow Stripe to the pool and enter it (you should have emptied it before blowing up the store). Now get the dazed Stripe and take him outside into the sunlight which will kill him.

Jonathan Atkinson in Burton on Trent asks:

"Could you please tell me how to escape from the Barrow-Wight in the proper version of *Lord Of The Rings*. In the beginners program Tom Bombadil gives you magic words to get past him, but in the other version this is not so."

You could wear the ring and walk past him or you could be more violent and throw a jewel at him.

Finally, a couple of questions on KENTILLA. **Carol Elliott** asks:

"Am I the only person ever not to have found the Silver Chalice and how can I get Timandra alive?"

I doubt it! The chalice is in the black sack in the Urga-mauls treasure room. Timandra should be rescued at the start of the game if she is to be found alive.

Duncan Maclean of Newcastle upon Tyne threatens a physical breakdown on his computer if the solution to passing the Karush is not revealed to him.

Try PUT MIRROR TO CAGE.

Finally I have had letters complaining that EXAMINE DEBRIS doesn't reveal the corked bottle in the room below the trapdoor. If this is true it may be that the jenii should first be freed from the lamp in the cave at the base of the waterfall. If anyone who has got this far could shed light on this problem I'd be most grateful.

And that concludes another SIGNSTUMPS. Keep on sending in your questions and solutions to:
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SHROPSHIRE
SY8 1DB

SUPERHEROES

There's no doubting the two games which supply this month's SUPERHEROES; the mail for L'AFFAIRE VERA CRUZ and BUGSY was overwhelming but I managed to struggle through somehow.

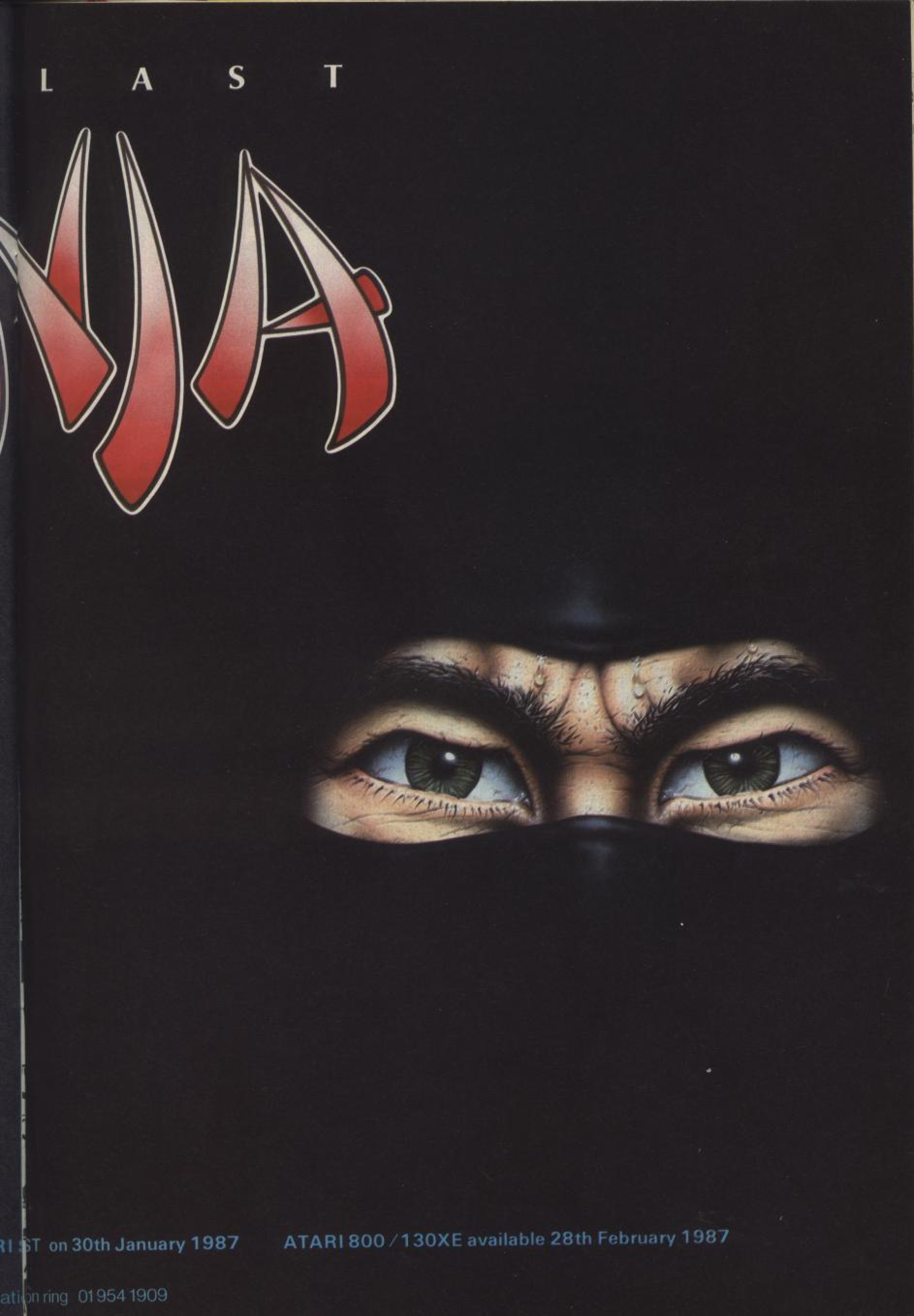
VERA CRUZ, as it's come to be known, has raised one **Brian Forbes** of Glasgow up onto the ultimate pedestal of hero worship. He earned his SUPERHERO credentials on October 11. Two of the many others who sent in solutions were **Don Markwick** (Oct 20) and **David Hodgson** from Durham. I can't tell you too much about the end of the game because it doesn't seem right telling you who dunnit so without further ado it's straight onto the next SUPERHERO.

BUGSY earned his carrot on November 9 and made a SUPERHERO out of **Andrew C Edney** of London. This CRL-backed ST BRIDES venture wraps up Part Two with the following utterance from the furry gangster: 'Wit' Capone outta da way, I take over da town. I am Public Enemy Number One. Okay, kid, raid ya dad's liquor stash. You earned it. An' if he don't like it, send 'im ta me'.

No carrots but no sticks either for the runners up. In what's been a good month for regulars' contributions **John Wilson** of Rochdale sent in his usual superb solution sheet boasting a 8.26 pm, November 17 finish which was just hours behind the BUGSY runner-up, **Ted Webb** of Hants (1.45pm).

In the November issue of THE TRAIL SHREWSBURY KEY unlocked a SUPERHERO who will remain anonymous no longer. It can now be revealed that the SHREWSBURY KEY SUPERHERO is none other than **M C Murray** of Leeds so let all his friends who wouldn't believe him now be suitably chastened!


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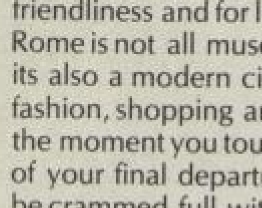


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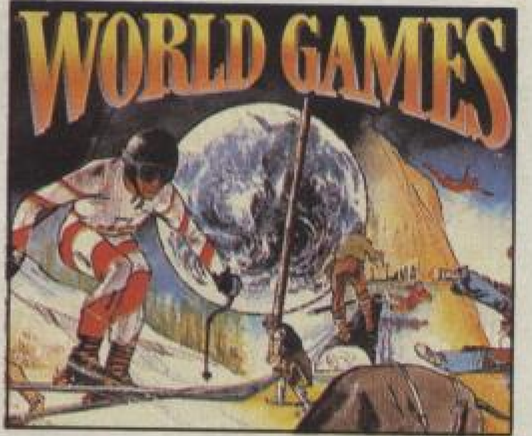
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Your Holiday includes



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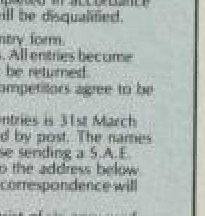
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2. The prizes stated will be awarded to the entrant who completes the questions correctly and in the event of a tie break, complete the caption in the most apt and original way.
3. The winning entrant will receive two air tickets to Rome, hotel accommodation for one week, two tickets for the world championships, plus £100 spending money. 25 runners up will each receive copies of Supercycle and Winter Games for either the C64/128, Spectrum or Amstrad.
4. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery.
5. Entries altered, illegible or not completed in accordance with the rules of entry requirements will be disqualified.
6. All entries must be on an official entry form.
7. 'How to enter' forms part of the rules. All entries become the property of U.S. Gold and cannot be returned.
8. It is a condition of entry that the competitors agree to be bound over by the rules.
9. The closing date for receipt of all entries is 31st March 1987. The prizewinners will be notified by post. The names of the winners will be available to those sending a S.A.E. marked 'World Games Competition' to the address below.
10. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
11. The competition entry should consist of six answered questions, three on the entry form and three included in the packaging of the game and are to be forwarded to:

RUNNERS-UP PRIZES



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Complete the questions and caption below together with the completed questions from the packaging and return to the address below. All entries must be received no later than 31st March 1987

Question 1. How many hills is Rome built on ....

Question 2. In what year was the Roman invasion of Britain ....

Question 3. Who painted the renowned ceiling of the Sistine Chapel ....

Caption (complete in not more than 25 words) Rome is an appropriate venue for the World Games because ....

....

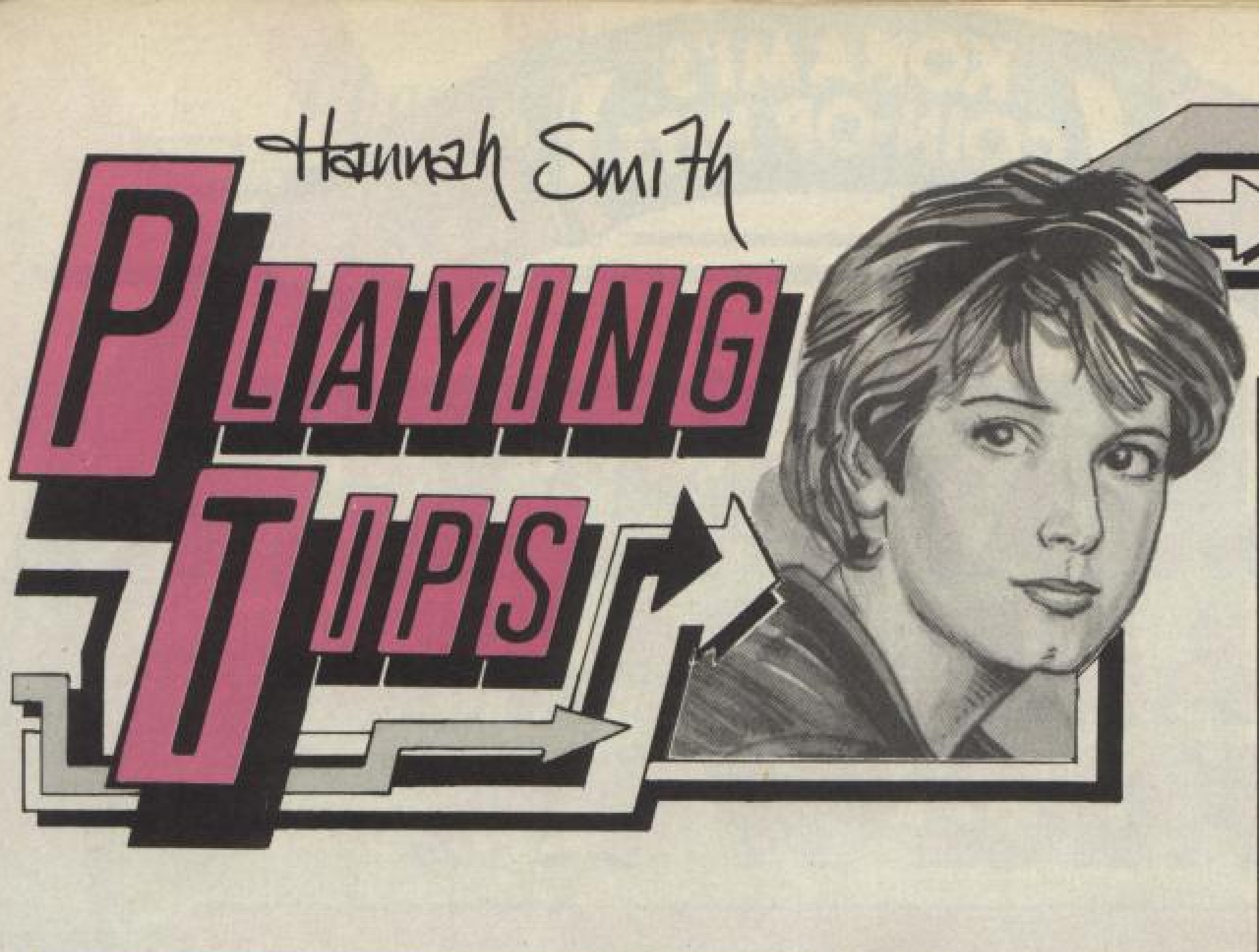
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So how's the New Year treating you so far? I've made a few New Year Resolutions *and* managed to keep them up until now! The first one on my list is to keep a sharp eye on my ZX Printer so that the POKEs don't have any mistakes in them ever again . . . ! I've also promised myself that I'll cut down on the frequent visits that CRASH team members make to Ludlow's Indian Restaurant, The Shapla Tandoori. Waist bands are expanding just a little too much for comfort at the moment. My last resolution is to start being nicer to the poor put-upon Comps Minion. No more fights with Girlie perfume and no more stapling his jumper to the table when he isn't looking. He's going on a diet too because he's getting a bit porky around the midriff as well!

I hope everyone enjoyed the Christmas Special Tips. I had a quick peek at C&VG's Christmas pamphlet to see if there was any reaction from Melissa Gravytrain. Poor girl seems to have been frightened into silence by the prospect of Graeme and I stomping down to the C&VG dungeons to pay a social visit. But do not worry, gentle reader: you'll be the first to hear about our exploits in the pages of CRASH.

Once again, the Playing Tips section is packed. Lots of POKEs and acres of Tips, not to mention the odd map or two. Top Tipster this month is a very ambiguous person who calls himself The Skunk and comes from Fife in Scotland. He's sent in an ingenious loader which can be used for quite a number of games, as long as you have the relevant data bolted onto the end. This makes typing in routines a lot less of a bind so he wins the £20 worth of software this month for his POKEs on *Cobra*, *Fairlight II* and *Bobby Bearing*.

Cartographer of the Month goes to Rajvinder Johal from Littleover in Derby for his maps of *Uridium*. We've got the first five Dreadnoughts on page 64, and next month there'll be another five. It was a hard toss-up though between that and Alistair Robson's map of *Firelord* or Richard Pitman's *Fairlight II*, part I. Richard lives in a little village called Shepton Beauchamp which is near Ilminster in Somerset. There's also a map of *Dandy* from D Wray, and a map of *Avenger* from two individuals who call themselves D *(Zen)* Williams and J *(zeb)* Golledge.

HEARTLAND TIPS

Here's the solution to the first four levels of this game, which was the subject of a main map in the Christmas Special. If I'm feeling generous (and if someone sends me in some tips for the remaining two levels, bwah) I'll include the rest next month. Anyway, many thanks to John Wittaker **and** Jeffrey Duncan **who live in Belfast for these tips.**

LEVEL ONE

In the room at the start of the game, wait for your hat to appear, get it and go as far left as possible. Wait here for the book. Pick it up and go right until you get back to your bed. Go to the door on the left, turn to face outwards towards the screen and go in. Go right as far as possible and the book in your inventory starts flashing. Wait here until the page drops. Get the page and retrace your steps back to your bed. Go to the bed and press fire and you proceed to Level Two.

LEVEL TWO

Go to the door at the left of your bed, face inwards and go through. Go to your right and into the next room. Go through the door on the right-hand side and go through it. The book starts flashing here, so wait until you get another page. Go to the door you just came through and, facing outwards, go through it. Now go to the door on your right and go through it. Go left. In the next room go through the door on the left. Go to the bed and press fire. You now proceed to Level Three.

LEVEL THREE

Go left from the bed. Go through the door on the right of the next room and enter it facing outwards. Go right twice from this room and wait until a page falls. Get the page, go left twice and, this time facing inwards, go through the door. On the next screen go right and you find yourself back at the bed. Press fire again and proceed to Level Four.

LEVEL FOUR

Go through the door on the right of the bed facing outwards. In the next room go through the thin wall on then left then go left again. On the following screen go through the door on the right, facing inwards. Go through the door on the left, then go left and through the door on your right. Then go through the wall and through the door on the right. In the next screen go through the door on the left, then the door on your right. Next go through the wall on the left on the next screen and wait here until the page falls down. Get the page and retrace your steps to the bed. Press fire and to go to Level Five.

Some additional tips: on Level Three the spacemen don't come to life again; on Level Four the walls are so thin you can walk through them. The Bubble Spell replenishes your energy and small Star Spells make you invisible, big Star Spells decrease your energy and finally the comets or Fireballs are the best weapons to use.

ANTIRIAD SOLUTION

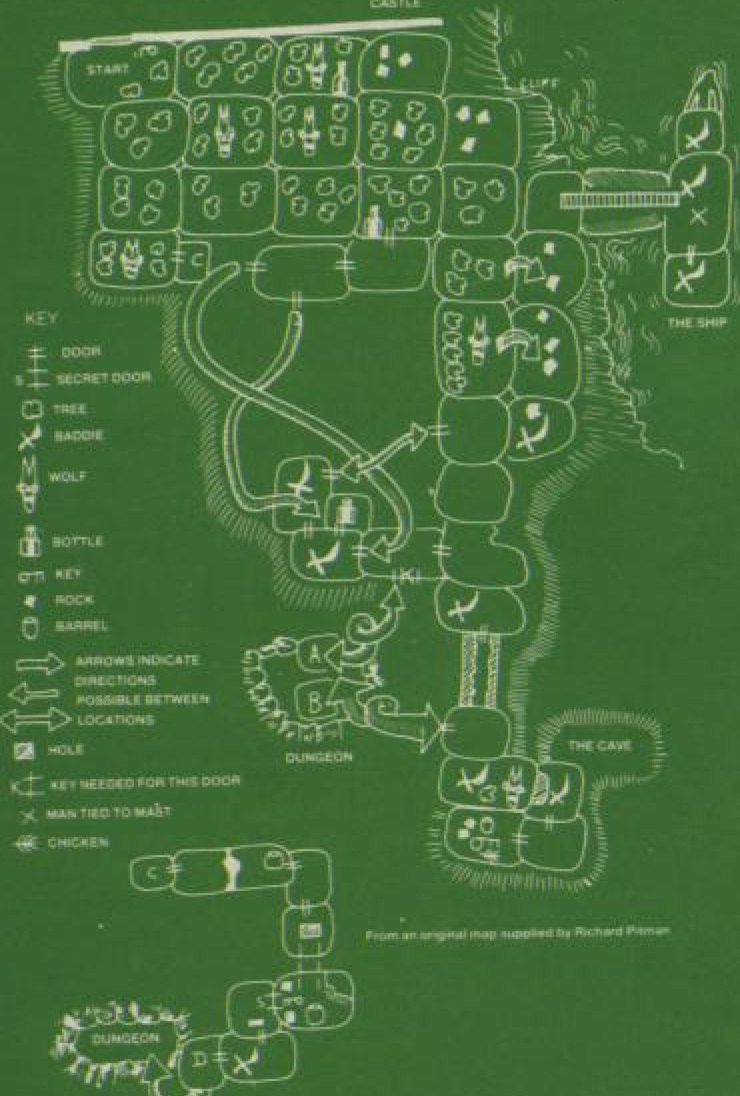
Way back in November, Dan Malone, **the elastic-featured designer from** PALACE **came to CRASH Towers to show us *The Secret Armour of Antiriad*. Although the game narrowly missed getting Smashed by the CRASH Reviewers, some people are still having mucho problemettes with it. Never fear though, because** Jethro Perkins **from Crawley in West Sussex has sent in the complete solution to help you locate the secret armour which you so dearly seek. You should be able to finish the game into the bargain! Hope I've managed to decipher your handwriting correctly, Jethro!**

From the start go left or right depending which side of the forest you start on, but first collect the stones as these are invaluable. When you reach the room with the armour jump vertically onto the pedestal, then jump across onto the ledge with the armour. Enter the armour and wait until you are back up to full strength. Then go left five times until you reach a room with a tree, two platforms, an energy recharger cell and two aliens (one red, one green). Kill the two aliens and then jump onto the lower platform. Now jump to the right onto the higher platform. Jump to the left and go through two screens (one directly above and one left and above). Land on another platform. Kill the red aliens, then jump left onto the left platform. Then jump right and land on a floor lever. Kill the two aliens, then jump left onto the central platform. Avoid the purple monster and jump up left again, collecting the anti-gravity boots. Then go right off the screen, drop down the hole and go right until you find the armour again. You can now take off. Go up, up, up again, (don't collect the energy cell yet) right, right, collect the pulsar beam, left, left, left, shoot alien, up, take left-hand exit up, right, (shoot aliens), up, shoot alien, exit armour, collect energy, left, shoot aliens, collect implosion, move right, enter suit, down, left, left, shoot aliens, collect energy, up, left hand exit up, left, left, left, up, up, right, collect particle disruptor, left, left, collect energy, up, up, left, collect energy, up, up, (between two parts of machinery), stand in between the two flashing gloves and you've done it. You get the message "Destruct sequence initialised. Five, four, three, two, one". (Lots of flashing and noise). "The oppressors are defeated. Your race is free."

Cooo, makes you feel good to be alive, eh?


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FAIRLIGHT II MAP



From an original map supplied by Richard Pitman

FAIRLIGHT II POKES

Fairlight II takes up the story of hapless Isvar where the original *Fairlight* left off. This time Isvar is given another chance to free the land of Fairlight. This is no easy task, but do not despair for help is at hand.

A chunky letter from 'The Skunk' from Fife in Scotland seems set to solve all your problems. This clever chappie has developed a special loader which works for many different games as long as you have the relevant game data. Simply type in the loader down to line 99 and then tack the relevant DATA onto the end in the form of line 100. Then type RUN and start the game tape. Alternatively the program can be saved on tape. If this is the case LOAD "" the loader and then MERGE "" the extra DATA and then RUN. Easy eh?

'The Skunk' has sent in five sets of POKEs and each set works by using the special loader. If you save the loader to tape, this saves lots of typing in for your over-worked little fingers. Anyway, enough of this technical waffle and here's "The Skunk's" contribution for *Fairlight II*. These POKEs give you infinite energy, open locked doors and enable you to carry any weight.

Type this in first (it's the special loader which you'll need before all of 'The Skunk' 's routines):

```
1 CLEAR 65000: LET t=0
2 FOR a=64223 TO 1e9: READ s:
IF s<999 THEN POKE a,s: LET
t=t+s: NEXT a
3 IF s<>t THEN PRINT "ERROR
IN DATA": STOP
9 RANDOMIZE USR 64225
10 DATA 24,46,33,89,5,93
15 DATA 22,250,1,134,0,213
20 DATA 237,176,235,35,35
25 DATA 34,95,250,46,122
30 DATA 112,46,215,116,46
35 DATA 207,54,188,33,38
40 DATA 210,34,126,250,225
45 DATA 49,61,251,221,225
50 DATA 209,191,55,8,249
55 DATA 233,49,65,251,221
60 DATA 225,209,59,225,193
65 DATA 205,29,251,24,43
70 DATA 221,110,0,124,170
75 DATA 171,221,172,221
80 DATA 173,173,221,119,0
85 DATA 124,203,99,40,3
90 DATA 129,131,146,128
95 DATA 103,221,35,27,122
99 DATA 179,32,225,201
```

LIST it and then type the extra DATA for *Fairlight II*:

```
100 DATA 244, 63, 10, 186, 0, 91,
252, 158, 180, 165, 141, 50, 221,
118, 62, 24, 50, 77, 125, 50, 109,
122, 195, 0, 91, 14903
```

Now press RUN and start the *Fairlight II* tape.
Don't panic because the screen looks completely corrupted and it seems as if the game isn't loading – be patient and let the tape finish. If you listen carefully you can hear the *Fairlight II* tune very faintly. Press enter and the game appears as if by magic. Isvar now has infinite energy and is able to open locked doors and carry enormous objects.

Cooo. 'The Skunk' says that he will send in more POKEs which can be used with his Special Loader, so watch this space (as they say). It looks as if the regular hackers have got a challenge on their hands!!

Solution To Part One

You really are being spoiled this month. Not only are there some juicy POKEs for *Fairlight II* to be getting on with, but now there's the route to complete Part One of the game. But don't thank me. Gawd, dearie me no. Paul Cripps who lives in the sunny Isle of Man is who we have to thank. No-one has sent in a full solution for Part Two of the game – hopefully one should have turned up in time for next issue.

Go right, down, down, right, right, right, right, pick up rock, down, down, down, down, down, down, left, left, get potion, left, left, left, left, left, left, top right, drop rock, stand on it to get the chicken and the key, left, up, up, make sure you are in the room with the two barrels and a bubble. Right, up, up, with cursor on the key, pick up object in front of hole. Go through the trapdoor, right, down, left, left, left, right, right. You should now be in a room with a potion in it. Right, right, right, right right, right, up, up, up, up, up, up, up, right, right, use the object you got from the room with the trapdoor and it's time to move onto Part Two . . .

COBRA POKES

Using the Special Loader given to you by 'The Skunk' (see *Fairlight II* POKEs), add this DATA on the end as line 100. This gives you infinite lives, although when I tested the POKEs I didn't get a full duck as 'The Skunk' had promised. Oh well, it still makes things easier for your Big Tough Guy. When the game is loading, the screen completely corrupts but as in *Fairlight II* DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING. When loaded, it automatically flips into the game. Amazing, eh?

Don't forget to type the special loader in first, and then add the following DATA:

```
100 DATA 225, 81, 83, 168, 168,
97, 88, 152, 92, 196, 68, 62, 183,
50, 109, 136, 62, 201, 50, 187, 154,
33, 95, 251, 17, 0, 91, 1, 14, 0, 213,
237, 176, 201, 33, 200, 249, 17,
254, 255, 1, 33, 152, 237, 184, 195,
16, 175, 18062
```

BOBBY BEARING POKES

I don't think these POKEs have been done before in Playing Tips, but I'm sure that you'll all correct me if I'm wrong! Once again 'The Skunk', using his amazing special loader, has come up with some extra DATA to make sure that the time never goes below 900. Type in the special loader (see *Fairlight II* POKEs) and then type this extra DATA in at line 100

```
100 DATA 186, 64, 183, 181, 0,
91, 111, 155, 16, 106, 110, 62, 36,
50, 190, 109, 195, 0, 91, 14056
```

The screen will look completely corrupted, but bear with it and everything works out okay. I wonder who this 'Skunk' really is? Will he/she ever reveal his/her (its?) true identity? (Could this be the Clark Kent of the computer world?)

SPLIT PERSONALITIES CORRECTION

Ben Stone **our resident games commentator has eventually got our ZX Printer fixed so there shouldn't be any more mistakes in the Playing Tips listings (as if!) Anyway, here's a correction from a while back for *Split Personalities*. For some totally inexplicable reason, I missed out a whole line of DATA. Well, deary me. Here it is in all its glory:**

```
1110 DATA 6, 94, 33, 0, 0
```

It should all work perfectly now.

GREAT ESCAPE POKES

Those Hackers from Haxby *(and Pocklington)* are getting even more industrious by the minute. After all their contributions in the Christmas Special I would have thought that they would have been quite worn out – ARE THEY HECK! Even after the Christmas festivities they are still raring to go and churning out the POKEs. This routine is for *The Great Escape* if you're too lazy to try the different permutations in order to escape.

These POKEs get rid of all the guards, dogs and prisoners. However, don't attempt to escape without the right equipment or else you'll still be slung in solitary! Completing this one is still fairly hard according to Smith, Bean and Austin. Surely some mistake there lads?!

```
10 REM C SMITH J BEAN D
AUSTIN
20 REM THE GREAT ESCAPE
POKES
30 CLEAR 65535
40 RESTORE
50 LET tot=0: LET w=1
60 FOR f=49984 TO 50136
70 READ a: LET tot=tot+w*a
80 POKE f,a: NEXT f
90 IF tot<>19480 THEN PRINT
"ERROR IN DATA": BEEP1,1:
STOP
100 PRINT # 1 AT 1,7; "START
ESCAPE TAPE2
110 RANDOMIZE USR 49984
1000 DATA 221, 33,203, 92, 17,
234, 6, 62
1010 DATA 255, 55, 205, 86, 5,
210, 64, 195
1020 DATA 243, 237, 94, 33, 109,
195, 229, 33
1030 DATA 200, 98, 229, 51, 51,
17, 3, 252
1040 DATA 1, 49, 3, 33, 253, 94,
62, 202
1050 DATA 237, 79, 195, 200, 98,
33, 135, 195
1060 DATA 229, 33, 39, 252, 229,
51, 51, 17
1070 DATA 49, 252, 33, 49, 252,
1, 3, 3
1080 DATA 62, 210, 237, 79, 195,
39, 252, 33
1090 DATA 49, 252, 17, 193, 138,
1, 92, 0
1100 DATA 237, 176, 33, 212, 138,
34, 217, 138
1110 DATA 34, 221, 138, 33, 202,
138, 34, 229
1120 DATA 138, 33, 239, 138, 34,
249, 138, 62
1130 DATA 195, 50, 13, 139, 33,
181, 195, 34
1140 DATA 14, 139, 195, 193, 138,
33, 224, 255
1150 DATA 34, 200, 254, 62, 195,
50, 199, 254
1160 DATA 33, 206, 195, 1, 15, 0,
17, 224
1170 DATA 255, 237, 176, 195,
147, 254, 62, 201
1180 DATA 50, 43, 200, 33, 229,
254, 195, 202
1190 DATA 254
```

THE GREAT ESCAPE: MORE TIPS

Last issue I printed some tips to help get you started on OCEAN's *The Great Escape*. As you will no doubt have gathered, there are various ways to complete the game involving different objects and different escape routes.

Hugh Milnes **and** Kevin Ewan **have discovered this way out of the Prisoner of War camp which I shall pass on to you. Sorry I couldn't use your map lads, but it has already been done!**

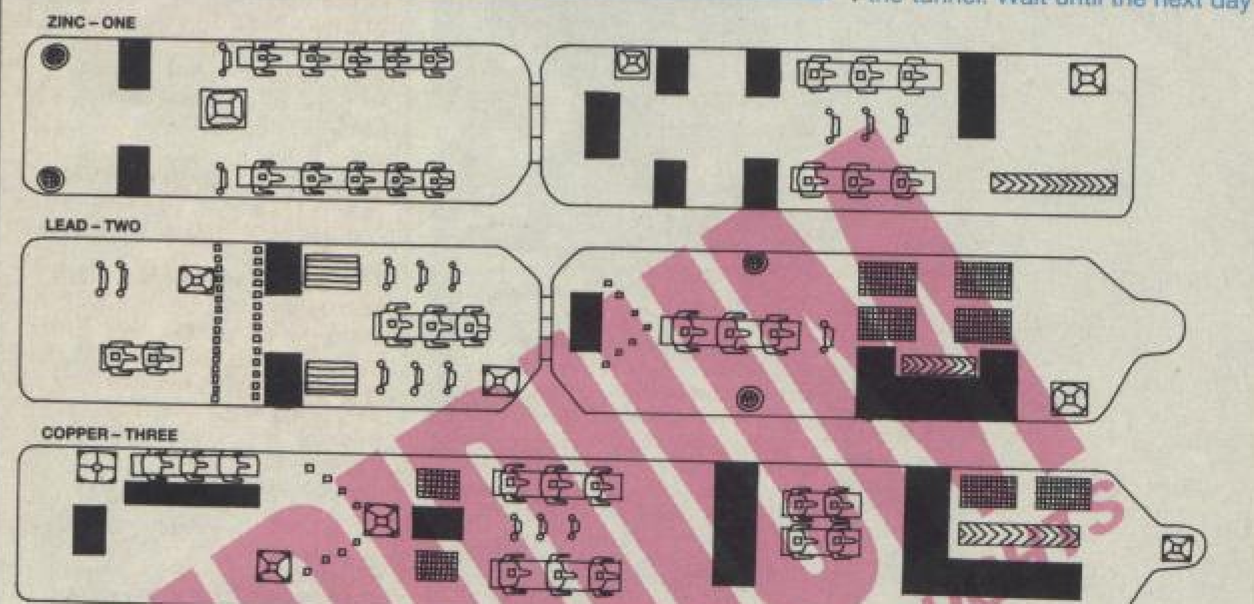
First get the Red Cross parcel. Open it and take the money to a guard and drop it. The guard should put you in solitary confinement. Now get the wire cutters. Take them to the fence opposite the tunnel marked in red, cut the fence and go into the tunnel. Keep going forwards until you come to a room with a spade in it. Pick up the spade, take it out of the tunnel and cut the wire. Go to the hut you started out in. Push the stove to one side and go into the tunnel and drop the spade and the wire cutters. Now get the key and go into the room containing the food. Unlock the door. Now go into the room with the torch and pick it up. Take it to your hut and put it in the tunnel. Now wait until the next day and get the Red Cross parcel. Open it and get the papers. Take them to your hut and put them in the tunnel. Wait until the next day (or get taken to solitary because it's quicker!) and get the next Red Cross parcel. Open it and get the compass. Take it to the tunnel and drop it. Stay in the tunnel and pick up the spade and the torch. Find the part of the tunnel which had collapsed and dig through it, then drop the spade. Take the wire cutters, the papers and the compass to the end of the tunnel. Cut the wire, drop the cutters, pick up the papers then go back for the compass and take it outside the wire. Drop the cutters, pick up the papers and walk down and *voila*, you should have completed the game and be tasting the sweet air of freedom!

WAR POKES

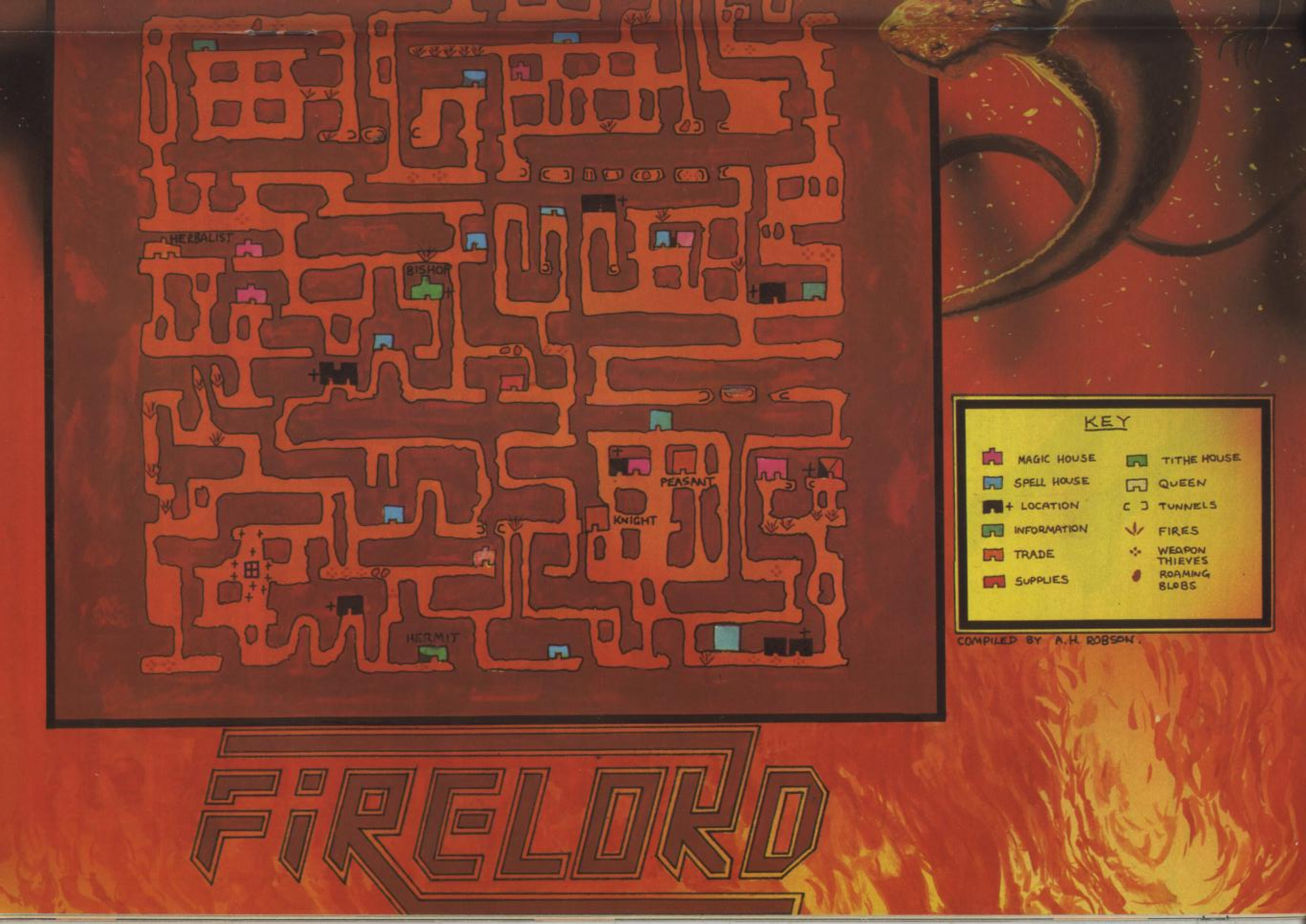
Once again Phil Churchyard **has been attacking some more games. The latest to fall under his POKEing fingers is *War*, that dastardly shoot em up from MARTECH. In fact, the last time I heard from Mr Churchyard he was still reeling from too much Christmas pudding. But then again, we are into the intensive diet season now!**

Type this routine into your Spectrum and press RUN. It gives you infinite lives in both versions of the game.

```
10 CLEAR 65504
20 BORDER 0: INK 0: PAPER 0:
CLS
30 LET TOT=0
40 LET WEIGHT=0
50 FOR i=30000 TO 30124
60 READ a: LET
tot=tot+weight×a
70 POKE i,a: LET
weight=weight+1
80 NEXT i
90 IF TOT <> 912658 THEN
PRINT "ERROR IN DATA":
BEEP 1,0: STOP
100 INK 7: PRINT AT 21,9;
"START TAPE"
110 RANDOMIZE USR 30000
1000 DATA 205,90,117,33,182
1001 DATA 92,1,58,0,205
1002 DATA 232,25,205,90,117
1003 DATA 62,58,50,123,93
1004 DATA 62,251,50,8,95
1005 DATA 62,217,50,11,95
1006 DATA 33,112,117,17,0
1007 DATA 64,1,61,0,237
1008 DATA 176,201,221,33,0
1009 DATA 91,17,17,0,175
1010 DATA 55,205,86,5,221
1011 DATA 33,0,91,42,83
1012 DATA 92,195,115,8,62
1013 DATA 252,50,174,252,62
1014 DATA 209,50,177,252,33
1015 DATA 163,252,17,0,128
1016 DATA 1,232,3,237,176
1017 DATA 33,0,128,34,216
1018 DATA 252,33,36,64,34
1019 DATA 30,253,195,209,252
1020 DATA 33,54,64,17,225
1021 DATA 255,237,83,156,255
1022 DATA 1,7,0,237,176
1023 DATA 195,51,255,175,50
1024 DATA 169,144,195,102,141
```




WITCH
START
WIZARD
REEVE
HERBALIST
TITHE
KNIGHT
BISHOP
TITHE
REEVE
PRINCESS
QUEEN
TITHE


HERBALIST
BISHOP
PEASANT
KNIGHT
HERMIT
KEY
MAGIC HOUSE
SPELL HOUSE
+ LOCATION
INFORMATION
TRADE
SUPPLIES
TITHE HOUSE
QUEEN
TUNNELS
FIRES
WEAPON THIEVES
ROAMING BLOBS
COMPILED BY A.H. ROBSON.
FIRELORD



PLAYING TIPS

ACADEMY TIPS

Lee Paddon **is our current champ at this monster game from** CRL. **However, even he concedes that he hasn't done quite as well as** Camilo Mesias **who lives in Leicester. Mr Mesias has sent in some tips to get any serious game player through to Mission Four. There's also a sketch map of Level Three, which is quite necessary as this happens to be one of the hardest levels.**

Now I must make an apology. Camilo **was responsible for the** ***Dynamite Dan II*** **maps we ran a few months ago and I credited the wrong person. Awfully sorry and all that chaps, but you know how over-worked I am these days. Whinge, moan, complain.**

MISSION ONE
"If It Moves . . . "

You find that your base is surrounded by four sets of Lighthouses in pairs. Do not destroy these as they are necessary for navigation. Design your own ship with as many of the following characteristics as possible: *good lasers; scanner; 4 bombs; 8 missiles; some ammunition; a compass; good main drive.* Then fly around close to your base and get rid of anything that isn't one of the Lighthouses.

Return to GLV and then equip. Fly out in between the sets of Lighthouses. When you find a ship steer towards it, but slow right down. There are groups of ships which thrash you in close combat, so stop and pick them off one by one. If at first they don't come towards you, inch closer and that should tempt them into combat. Use up all your missiles against them and then turn towards GLV (use ADF) and burn. Change view to rear and keep shooting. Drop as many bombs as possible and be careful that you don't crash into GLV while facing backwards (now that would be embarrassing!). With some luck the bomb will detonate your enemy's ships. If it doesn't, return to GLV, re-group, re-equip and repeat.

Repeat this manoeuvre for each direction of the compass, destroying Lighthouses so that you know where you've been. You should easily get a pass on this level. If it gets dark, return to GLV and wait five minutes until the sun rises again.

MISSION TWO
Red Dawn

Use the same ship as in Mission One, but add Jump/door unit, I/R or flares, and 8 rounds of ammunition. Do not shoot the jump pads! This is crucial.

First destroy everything around the GLV except the jump pads. Re-equip and jump somewhere. You find yourself at one of the outposts. Locate the robot factories and keep well away from them until the very last minute or else they'll thrash you. Shoot everything else. Fly between the factories, bombing as you go. Use ADF to return home once you are sure that the factories are gone (use scanner). Use your ammunition because the robot factories lob robot missiles at you very quickly indeed. If you run out of ammo then burn home, but face backwards so that you can use all the missiles. It's a long drive home, but don't panic as there is enough fuel for a two-way journey. Re-fuel, repeat and re-equip and head back to get the other factories.

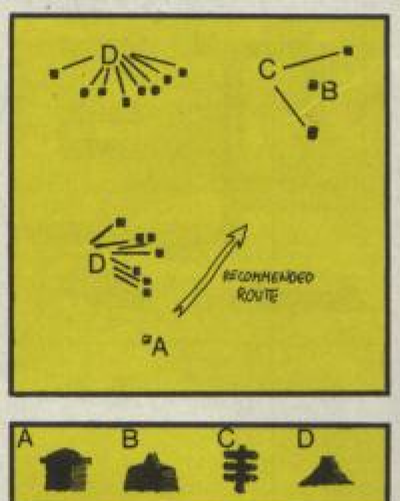
MISSION THREE
Meltdown

This is probably the hardest of the first four missions and use of the map will be a great help.

get a new ship with: high shield; high lasers; high amm's; 4 bombs; scanner; a compass; missiles . . .

Avoid the mines which are shown on the scanner as four dots, close together in a small square. Shoot these while they are still at a distance. Every now and then slow down, stop and look at the scanner. Anything still moving is a ship or a missile so blast it before it gets you. Avoid the fortresses if possible or bomb them if you have to (remember top get well away from the explosion yourself or it'll be bye-bye Skimmer).

The volcano-shaped objects are indestructable and NOT the reactor, so don't waste your ammo on them. The reactor is shown on the small map of this level. Time is the most important thing in this mission, therefore you can't do the old trick of waiting for the sun to come up – perseverance is the only thing that will get you through this mission.



MISSION FOUR
Softly Softly

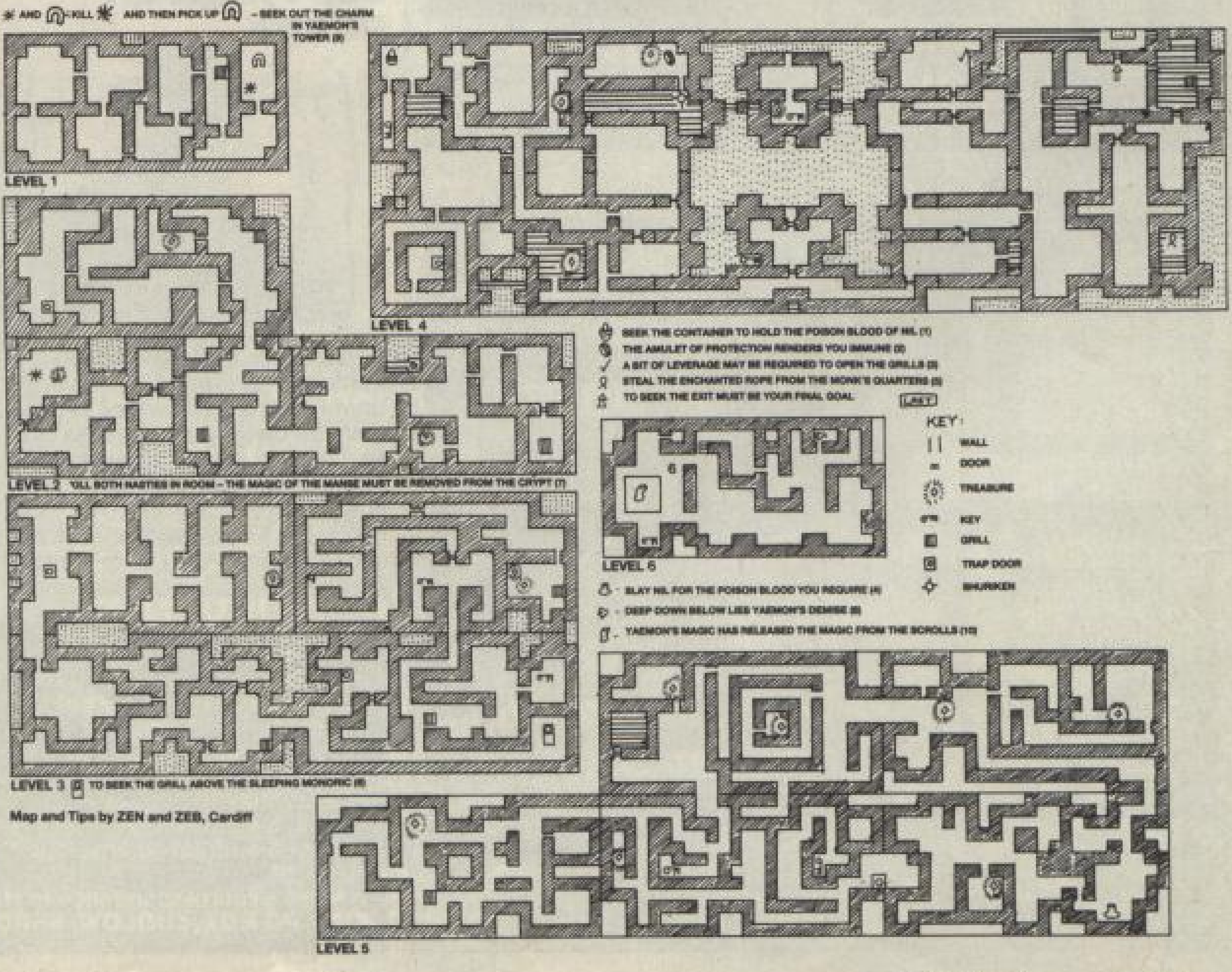
This mission is dead easy (according to *C Mesias*!). Use a ship with good lasers, main drive, shield scanner and a compass. Follow the corridor of mines carefully and repeat the process of stopping and checking the scanner for ships – there are a few. When you get to a corner be careful not to turn into the mines. For speed, try to use missiles on ships attacking you. Remember, scoring is on a time basis, but dock very carefully at the end or you may waste it all!

GENERAL TIPS

1) Use low power steering – it is easy to control. If you become surrounded, change view to shoot the ships rather than turning around. If there is something in your way – for example a building – then stop, otherwise you needn't change your flight path.
2) Bombs are extremely useful, but you rarely need more than four because you can only release one at a time and you can re-equip after destroying something by returning to the GLV.
3) If ships are attacking you from a good distance, stop and pick them off with lasers and missiles. If surrounded, drop a bomb and burn away, changing view to shoot as many ships as possible. They follow you and a bomb may well get rid of the lot of them.
4) In the buildings (GLV for example) you can abbreviate the written commands by adding a full stop.
5) For really high scores, don't dock with the GLV if you have 85%-89% as it adds 5% and you will be forced to end the game.
6) Don't shoot the lasers aimlessly: make sure that they are going to hit something before you fire. Using this method the lasers won't overheat too much.
7) Mines are deadly, so shoot them from a good distance. They are often grouped in fours in the shape of a square (but not always).
8) When you complete a mission with more than 90%, save the game so that you can load it in the next time you play *Academy*. This way you can save a lot of time.

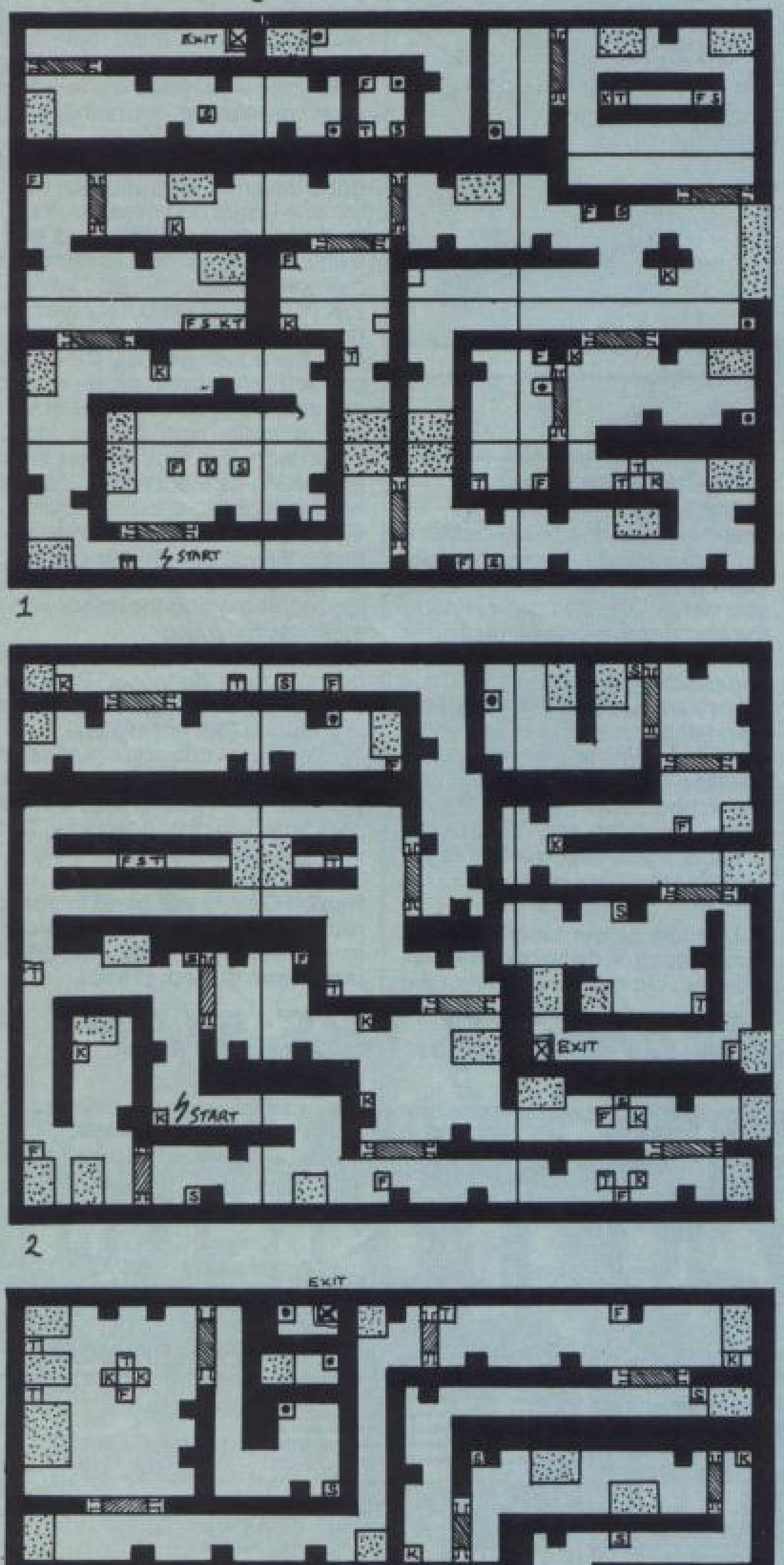
Maybe Camilo **will send in some more tips for the other missions in** ***Academy*** **so they can go in next issue (creep, creep).**

AVENGER THE MAP



Map and Tips by ZEN and ZEB, Cardiff

DANDY THE MAP



KEY: DOOR; KEY; SPELL; FOOD; SECRET PASSAGE; START; EXIT

ZUB SOLUTION

What noise do bees make when they fly backwards? Zzub – Zzub. Ho, ho. This rather strange game from MASTERTRONIC involves jumping on platforms and teleporting to strange lands, and all because the Emperor wants his jewels back.

J Preece from Cannock in Staffs had no problems completing his mission – here's how:

To get to Zub 10 and back again, it is necessary to know where the three teleports at the top of the screen take you – each one takes you to a different Zub planet. So by looking at the table, you can work out the quickest route there and back again . . .

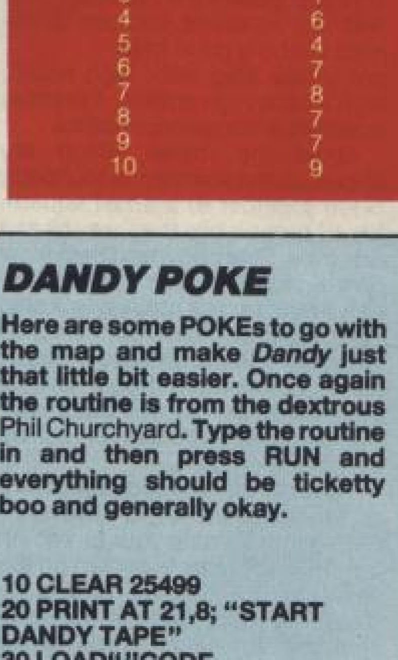
LOCATION	LEFT TELEPORT	MIDDLE TELEPORT	RIGHT TELEPORT
1	2	3	2
2	1	2	3
3	1	2	4
4	6	5	3
5	4	6	4
6	7	4	5
7	8	9	6
8	7	9	9
9	7	10	8
10	9	9	9

DANDY POKE

Here are some POKEs to go with the map and make *Dandy* just that little bit easier. Once again the routine is from the dextrous Phil Churchyard. Type the routine in and then press RUN and everything should be ticketty boo and generally okay.

```
10 CLEAR 25499
20 PRINT AT 21,8; "START
DANDY TAPE"
30 LOAD""CODE
40 RANDOMIZE USR 23407
50 RANDOMIZE USR 23410
60 RANDOMIZE USR 50000
70 POKE 23681,49
80 RANDOMIZE USR 23404
90 POKE 35972,201: REM
STOPS MOVING CREATURES
100 POKE 27598,0 : REM THOR
INFINITE TIME
110 POKE 27647,0 : REM SHEBA
INFINITE TIME
120 POKE 27601,33: POKE
27602,232: POKE 27603,3: REM
THOR INFINITE ENERGY
130 POKE 27650,33:POKE
27651,232: POKE 27652,3: REM
SHEBA INFINITE ENERGY
140 RANDOMIZE USR 25500
```

CLIFFHANGER POKES



Some time ago NEW GENERATION software released a strange game called *Cliffhanger*. It basically involved pushing boulders and other large objects onto nasty cowboys. Very sick. Anyway, Liam Hudson and Tim Duncan from Middlesborough have sent in these POKEs for up to a hundred lives for the big mean hero Cliff. Simply type them into your Spectrum and press RUN. When the game has loaded Cliff should have a slightly easier job on his hands.

```
10 REM LIAM HUDSON AND TIM
DUNCAN
20 REM CLIFFHANGER POKES
30 BORDER 0: PAPER 0: INK 7:
CLEAR 25659
40 RESTORE
50 FOR B=23296 TO 23309:
READ A: POKE B.A: NEXT B
60 PRINT: PRINT "START CLIFF
HANGER TAPE PLEASE"
70 RANDOMIZE USR 23296:
RANDOMIZE USR 232296
80 POKE 65504, 201
90 RANDOMIZE USR 65280
100 INPUT "NUMBER OF LIVES
(1-100)"; A: POKE 26515, A
110 RANDOMIZE USR 25660
120 DATA 221, 33, 171, 254, 17,
48, 1, 62, 255, 55, 205, 86, 5, 201
```

That's that for another month. Let's have those maps and tips rolling in. Keeps the Ludlow postman fit you know! How about a map and tips for part two of *Fairlight II* or a map of *Nosferatu*?

Once again it's apology corner. Apparently I didn't credit Phil Churchyard for his *Uridium* POKEs last issue. Chris Wild did the first set of POKEs but it was the young Mr Churchyard who did the *Uridium* POKEs Mark II. Sor-eee.

Also, if you want any maps returned, please could you enclose a stamped addressed envelope? Just like the old days of Vision On, eh?

Mark all correspondence to **HANNAH SMITH, CRASH PLAYING TIPS, PO BOX, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB**

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TOP THIRTY FOR FEBRUARY

Three new entries this month are Golden Oldies – STARQUAKE, TURBO ESPRIT and SABOTEUR, while five more games make their debut appearance. When it comes to GAUNTLET 'clones' DANDY clearly has the edge at the moment, arriving at the 15th slot, leaving DRUID trailing at the bottom of the chart. What will happen when the votes for the real thing arrive? URIDIUM and GREAT ESCAPE bound up from the bottom as JACK THE NIPPER starts what could prove to be a serious slide. The lads from Walsall still dominate the upper echelons of the Hotline . . . this time GHOSTS AND GOBLINS changes places with PAPERBOY.

Oliver Leeds from Tonbridge collects the first £40 worth of software given away on the Hotline in 1987. As usual, a quartet of runners up collect their shirts and hats: Stuart Rothwell from Washington, Martin Bartlett from Newton Abbot, Paris Nainggolan from Horley, and Iver Rowland – our sole overseas representative – who sent his votes all the way from County Mayo.

The HOTLINE AND ADVENTURE CHART compiled from the votes of CRASH readers is the most realistic chart for gauging the popularity of Spectrum games — it is the games that are being played that get the votes, not the games that are in the shops this week or month.

And the votes are important. It's up to you to let us know what you feel, so fill in the voting forms that live on the Results pages and make your voice heard. Well, make your writing readable — there's no longer a phoneline voting service.

If you don't want to carve up your copy of CRASH, we understand. Use a photocopy if you like, or copy out the details from the voting forms onto a nice clean sheet of paper and send that to us instead.

Apart from the satisfaction of registering your opinion, there's always the chance of winning a rather interesting prize. Once the information has been taken from the forms we receive during the course of the month, ten voting slips are drawn out for special consideration by Auntie Aggie — five from the Adventure Ballot Box and five from the Hotline Ballot Box.

A top prize of £40 worth of software (your choice, not ours) and a CRASH T Shirt is awarded to the first slip out of the draw from the Hotline votes, and another £40 worth of goodies and a Shirt goes to the Hotline Draw winner.

Four runners up from each ballot collect a CRASH T Shirt and a CRASH Hat, so get those votes in to the CRASH HOTLINE and CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.

Hotline Top 30

1 *(2)*	**PAPERBOY**	ELITE
2 *(1)*	**GHOSTS AND GOBLINS**	ELITE
3 *(8)*	**LIGHTFORCE**	FTL
4 *(17)*	**THE GREAT ESCAPE**	OCEAN
5 *(29)*	**URIDIUM**	HEWSON
6 *(4)*	**COMMANDO**	ELITE
7 *(7)*	**ELITE**	FIREBIRD
8 *(11)*	**MATCH DAY**	OCEAN
9 *(3)*	**BOMBJACK**	ELITE
10 *(–)*	**FIRELORD**	HEWSON
11 *(23)*	**DAN DARE**	VIRGIN
12 *(5)*	**QUAZATRON**	HEWSON
13 *(–)*	**COBRA**	OCEAN
14 *(20)*	**TRIVIAL PURSUIT**	DOMARK
15 *(–)*	**DANDY**	ELECTRIC DREAMS
16 *(12)*	**GREEN BERET**	IMAGINE
17 *(–)*	**STARQUAKE**	BUBBLE BUS
18 *(–)*	**1942**	ELITE
19 *(10)*	**BATMAN**	OCEAN
20 *(9)*	**DYNAMITE DAN II**	MIRRORSOFT
21 *(6)*	**JACK THE NIPPER**	GREMLIN GRAPHICS
22 *(25)*	**TRAPDOOR**	PIRANHA
23 *(21)*	**SPELLBOUND**	MASTERTRONIC
24 *(18)*	**PING PONG**	IMAGINE
25 *(–)*	**TURBO ESPRIT**	DURELL
26 *(16)*	**HEAVY ON THE MAGICK**	GARGOYLE GAMES
27 *(14)*	**BOBBY BEARING**	THE EDGE
28 *(–)*	**SABOTEUR**	DURELL
29 *(24)*	**EXPLODING FIST**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
30 *(–)*	**DRUID**	FIREBIRD

Adventure Top 30

HEAVY ON THE MAGICK stays at the top for the fifth consecutive

the crash CHARTS

HEAVY ON THE MAGICK stays at the top for the fifth consecutive month. Will it still be there in 1988? FAIRLIGHT II comes bounding into the chart at the mid-point, chasing its older brother which loses a tiny bit of ground and slips to 5th position. LORD OF THE RINGS re-asserts its popularity, rising 17 places and THE BOGGIT bubbles up to the Number Two slot. Nothing new appears in the chart this month, apart from Isvar's continued adventure . . . surely the Adventure Chart isn't becoming a Closed Shop?

Malcolm Sims, a dedicated Mike Singleton fan collects the £40 of Adventure Chart prize for February. Can he hold out with his voucher until Eye of the Moon or *Dark Sceptre* finally make an appearance? Hats and shirts are off to Stuart Rothwell (another Washington resident), Zak Stenhouse from Sale, Ian Gillibrand from Formby, and, just to break the northern monopoly, N S Wilson from Godalming is in line for a bit of designer CRASH clothing.



Adventure Top 30

1 *(1)*	**HEAVY ON THE MAGICK**	GARGOYLE GAMES
2 *(9)*	**THE BOGGIT**	CRL
3 *(2)*	**KNIGHT TYME**	MASTERTRONIC
4 *(5)*	**FAIRLIGHT**	THE EDGE
5 *(4)*	**SPELLBOUND**	MASTERTRONIC
6 *(3)*	**LORDS OF MIDNIGHT**	BEYOND
7 *(6)*	**THE HOBBIT**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
8 *(8)*	**DOOMDARKS REVENGE**	BEYOND
9 *(26)*	**LORD OF THE RINGS**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
10 *(–)*	**MINDSTONE**	THE EDGE
11 *(20)*	**GREMLINS**	ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL
12 *(14)*	**BORED OF THE RINGS**	SILVERSOFT
13 *(7)*	**PRICE OF MAGIK**	LEVEL 9
14 *(22)*	**TIR NA NOG**	GARGOYLE GAMES
15 *(–)*	**FAIRLIGHT II**	THE EDGE
16 *(12)*	**REDHAWK**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
17 *(15)*	**RED MOON**	LEVEL 9
18 *(16)*	**THE FOURTH PROTOCOL**	CENT/HUTCHINSON
19 *(13)*	**SHADOWFIRE**	BEYOND
20 *(19)*	**DUN DARACH**	GARGOYLE GAMES
21 *(18)*	**DRAGONTORC**	HEWSON
22 *(–)*	**SEABASE DELTA**	FIREBIRD
23 *(21)*	**SHERLOCK**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
24 *(29)*	**MARSPORT**	GARGOYLE GAMES
25 *(–)*	**MINDSHADOW**	ACTIVISION
26 *(–)*	**ENIGMA FORCE**	BEYOND
27 *(24)*	**HAMPSTEAD**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
28 *(10)*	**KENTILLA**	MASTERTRONIC
29 *(–)*	**VALKYRIE 17**	RAM JAM
30 *(–)*	**SPIDERMAN**	ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL



DRAWING ON

Lee Paddon coaxes a few dark secrets from John Ricard… from the confines of his warped mind every month

Until Issue Six, CRASH had been carrying on nicely, dedicating itself to reviewing the latest in computer games. Light-hearted perhaps, humourous hopefully, but fairly earnest nevertheless. Then along came *Jetman*, and nothing at CRASH Towers has ever been quite the same since.

It all started quietly. No fanfare, no blurb, no introduction: he just appeared, suddenly and silently. The original excuse for the strip was a game called *Lunar Jetman*



(lost in the mists of time but recently released on an US GOLD/ ULTIMATE compilation). Reviewed in the very first issue of CRASH, it got the highest ever 'value for money' rating – a 'perfect' 100% Obviously flushed with this success, Tim Stamper (the reclusive head of ULTIMATE) decided he wanted to promote the game with a comic strip.

Tim had seen John Richardson's work in other magazines and commissioned the strip from John, who explains his involvement with the computer games world: "Tim sent me a copy of the game on tape. I tried loading it on my Sirius computer, but it didn't seem to work so I've never actually seen it. In fact, the only computer game I've ever played since then is *Star Trek* on my Sirius – that was so awful I've never tried to play one since. I must admit I've never met Tim. The nearest I ever got was when the strip was rather late and his father came to pick it up."

ULTIMATE GAME

Since then *Jetman* has taken on a life of his own. The game has faded from memory, and even ULTIMATE isn't the name it once was. But *Jetman* lives on. In fact if the *Jetman* strip misses an issue, there are howls of anguish. It makes the rest of us toiling minions at CRASH Towers feel really insignificant sometimes . . .

So who is the warped mind behind this inter-galactic goon? A sign on the door of a Middlesborough studio proudly announces Richardson Freelance.



Inside I found John busy toiling away on a strip for CUSTOM CAR. Obviously aimed at a slightly different audience, this follows the adventures of a superhero called *Super C C* and his topless assistant (no, she doesn't stop at the waist). Well, what do you expect from these car freaks – they can't even have a motor show without spraying the place with scantily clad young ladies!

Amongst John's other commissions are a strip featuring *Tina Tallpipe* for SUPER BIKE, and *Pwlong* for a CB magazine. Pwlong is, so John assures me, the Greek God of CB (well the Greeks were a very advanced civilisation). Apparently, Pwlong was born deaf, and only the advent of CB has given him the ability to hear.

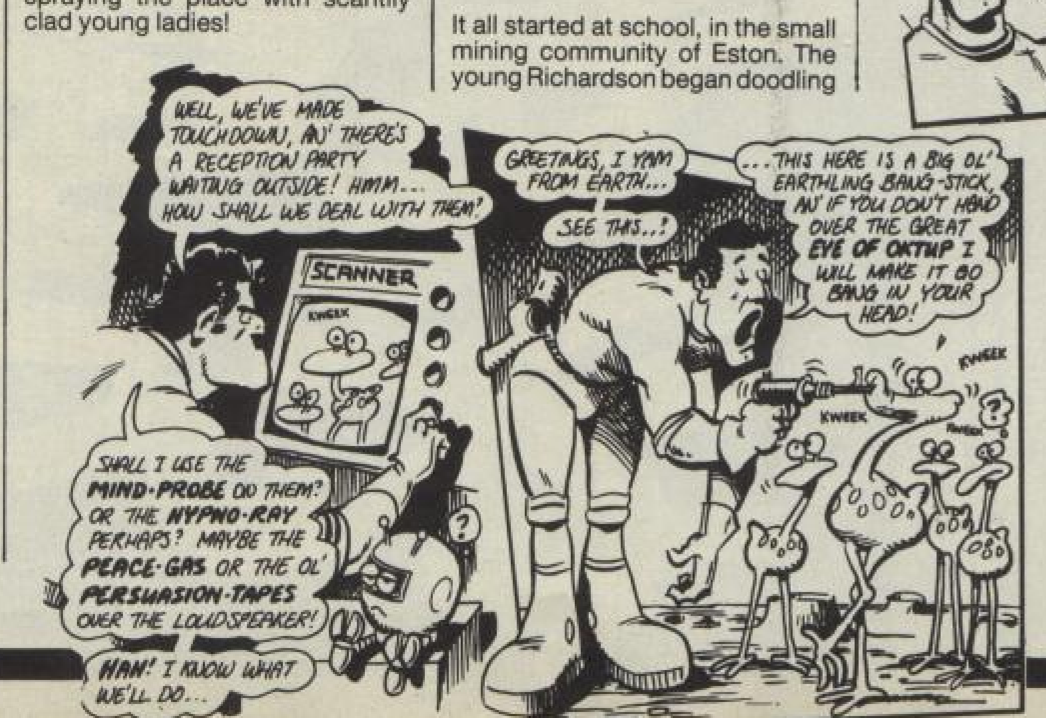
By way of a complete change of style and emphasis, John also produces a *Famous Five* strip for an Enid Blyton fanzine. "Fortunately, I only have to draw the pictures for this – they supply the plot line. It's published in Denmark and appears in lots of different languages. It's really weird to see your speech bubbles filled with some totally unheard of language. I suppose there must be a lot of Enid Blyton fans out there somewhere who just can't get enough of the Famous Five," John explains.

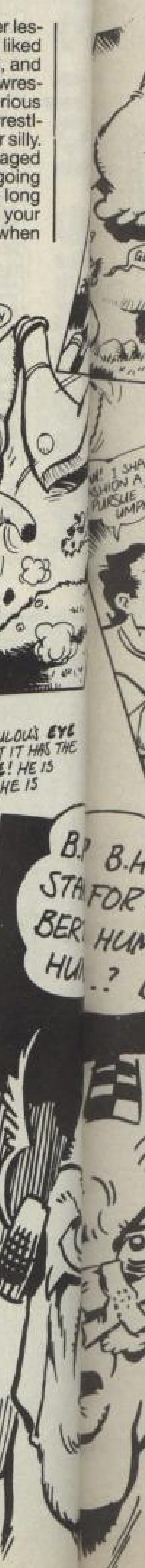
THE BEGINNINGS . . .

It all started at school, in the small mining community of Eston. The young Richardson began doodling away during some of his duller lessons, and decided he rather liked it. After a spell as a farmhand, and six weeks as a professional wrestler, he got down to some serious drawing. "I couldn't take to wrestling. It was quite fun, but rather silly. The whole thing is stage managed – you rehearse what you are going to do and when. It's okay as long as you both remember your moves. What's worse is when









INSPIRATION

hardson, the man who allows Jetman to escape



you're meant to win, and the other guy decides he wants to impress his girlfriend and throws you around.

"My drawing was influenced by the late Frank Bellamy's work on the old Eagle comics. It's a pity really that so many of the good British comic artists have moved to the US where salaries can be astronomic – just because the magazines have such huge circulations."

OVER THE TOP

"My first strip was *Phantom of Fells* in BUNTY. The heroine was a teenage girl, and this Phantom kept popping up all over the place. Really terrible stuff, but they seemed happy enough. I then drew a strip called *The Mean Arena* in 2000AD. It was a futuristic American Football type game. Just about as far away from BUNTY as you could get. I wrote the plot for that myself – the sport included rules like you were allowed to kill a certain number of opponents during the game, and all sorts of totally over the top stuff like that.

"Another thing which helped me to develop my style was having to fill in for other artists. My agent would ring up and tell me that so-and-so was ill, or on holiday, and I'd have to quickly get in to the style of that artist. This really helps you to learn from other people and gradually evolve something unique. As for plots, I like science fiction, particularly Arthur C Clarke, author of *2001, A Space Odyssey*"

Naturally, the uppermost thought in the minds of *Jetman*'s many fans, must be 'what's going to happen to him next?' Unfortunately the development of the storyline is a closely guarded secret, and as John keeps the plot locked in a safe deposit box in a highly secret Swiss bank . . . there's no way we can give you a sneak preview . . .

Actually, that's a Big Fib: "I make it up as I go along. I start drawing the strip and hardly know what's going to happen from one frame to the next . . . if you've got any good ideas, they might come in handy!"

So there's an open invitation to *Jetman* fans: if you want to influence the outcome of your favourite strip, write to John at CRASH, and we'll forward your suggestions to him. Who knows – they might even turn up in future strips!

PAY CHEQUES

According to John, the best thing about drawing cartoon strips is receiving the pay cheques – he looks forward to them with particular fondness. "The jokes are fun, but after I've drawn the thing and lived with it for a few weeks, it somehow doesn't seem quite as funny as when I first thought of it."

John has no idea where a lot of the made-up words that *Jetman* uses – like Bwah and Dongle – came from, but he suspects that there is a great deal of himself in the character. This sounds like rampant paranoia, because as John admits, the central theme of Jetman is that *everyone* is constantly trying to get rid of him – preferably permanently.

Fans of John's work will be pleased to see that he is going to have his own strip in our sister magazine **LM**, in the form of *Umquat The Alien* – defender of freedom, seeker of truth and justice, President of the Galactic Tail Waggers Club, seeker of wisdom and cheapo souvenirs, prannie of the universe, gallumphing gourmet, and general mental incompetent. He's also the owner of a clapped-out spaceship which keeps going 'Phut'. Oh yes, he just happens to have a computer disguised as a rather curvaceous looking alien.



The **LM** strip also introduces those nice little chaps, the Grumlins. These are some of John's regular characters, that tend to crop in his work, generally messing things up. "I use them whenever the plot wants to change direction a bit . . . if something blows up when you least expect it, it's handy to be able to blame the Grumlins."



LISTEN TO LOUD SOUNDS WITH DOMARK

Crash Competition

WIN A 'GHETTOBLASTER'

20 Loony Balls on offer too!

After a hard day at the office being persecuted, your humble Comps Minion likes nothing better than to wind down by playing a few computer games. Of course I'm not allowed to play during working hours. If I'm caught within a twenty foot radius of a Spectrum, the dreaded Kidd or the Girlie Tipster grab me by both feet and swing me back into the broom cupboard – Sigh! However, as soon as 6.00 comes around and the spikey-haired ones have left for the pub, I sneak back into the darkened offices and blam and blast away at those aliens to my heart's delight.

One of my favourite games at the moment is DOMARK's *Orbix the Terrorball*, released on their new STREETWISE label. It involves manoeuvring Orbix (a Tactical Planetary Warfare craft) around a hostile planet while at the same time collecting spare parts for a space ship and rescuing crew members. It's great – the Orbix bounces and boings all over the place. It certainly needs some concentration though.

Sometimes I'm at the office blasting away with the joystick until 10.00! But after that Mummy Minion gets worried so I make my way back home. One night after Mummy had made me a supper of Christmas cake and hot choccy I had the most horrible dream. Somehow I was trapped inside the Orbix featured in DOMARK's game and it was running wild, controlled only by a manic Girlie Tipster and the crazy Mr Kidd. Not only that, but I was being pursued by giant insects and mechanical droids who were all hell-bent on ensuring my swift demise. To make matters worse, instead of trying to win the game, Smith and Kidd were deliberately trying to make me lose by ramming me into the walls and making me confront my enemies. Just as the last life in the game flipped to zero I woke up sweating profusely with my teeth chattering.

Anyway, those nice people at DOMARK have decided that all the blasting, sweating and recurring dreams are worth some reward. All you have to do is solve this word square by finding the words listed below, which are all characters and features in *Orbix The Terrorball*. There are some stupendous prizes waiting for the winners. For the first correct answer pulled out of Hannah's Girlie make-up bag there's a fab Philips Roller 'Brixton Briefcase' (or ghettoblaster to the un-hip). For twenty runners up there are Impossiballs. These bouncy spheroids contain a weight so that when bounced they make all sorts of crazy patterns giving the user hours of endless pleasure.

If you fancy winning, then get to it and find those missing words. Send your entry to ORBIX (THE TERRORBALL) COMPETITION, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB making sure that it arrives no later than 28th February.

FIND THE FOLLOWING WORDS:

ORBIX
TERRORBALL
STREETWISE
INSECTOVORS
DRONES
DROIDS
HORCA
CREW
CRYSTALS
IMPOSSIBALL

A	K	L	M	C	R	D	I	S	F	G	A	E	O	B	T	R	C	V	A
I	N	S	E	C	T	O	V	O	R	S	P	K	C	R	E	W	U	G	X
M	W	J	Q	X	U	N	E	Y	G	L	Q	W	N	A	R	B	D	S	H
P	I	B	Q	D	M	W	I	L	T	Z	F	J	C	P	R	O	M	T	V
O	P	Z	H	V	H	O	V	F	S	I	Y	Z	U	D	O	U	K	D	Y
S	R	G	A	L	T	J	F	O	M	B	U	H	V	E	R	N	E	C	H
S	F	H	D	C	G	K	O	A	A	E	B	B	P	C	B	S	T	D	Q
I	X	E	H	J	C	B	D	R	C	R	V	B	O	S	A	F	E	G	P
B	T	H	I	C	E	Y	E	I	H	X	N	T	X	R	L	P	J	Q	Y
A	N	D	S	I	D	U	O	R	B	I	X	A	Z	N	L	Q	V	K	D
L	J	L	T	T	D	J	X	K	W	L	W	M	B	Q	W	H	P	C	O
L	W	K	A	N	R	X	V	E	S	Z	Y	W	F	D	R	O	I	D	S
S	Y	L	Y	I	M	E	Z	U	G	A	H	G	I	R	F	R	B	X	Z
C	S	T	G	R	X	D	E	L	I	F	F	K	P	O	O	C	M	N	E
Z	P	F	M	E	D	Z	H	T	O	T	Q	V	A	N	E	A	R	G	R
K	Q	H	M	R	I	Y	K	U	W	J	C	S	F	E	J	R	J	N	K
L	N	F	O	M	X	N	I	O	G	I	S	L	K	S	T	P	O	H	Z
L	V	N	J	Q	W	B	R	W	S	P	S	U	T	V	U	Q	I	L	N
U	E	N	T	O	V	U	J	M	P	P	W	E	X	V	Y	W	G	Z	X
S	L	A	T	S	Y	R	C	A	Y	H	B	Z	A	Q	C	B	K	O	Q

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

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..............POST CODE ....

BACKNUMBERS 1986

CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM

No 24 Xmas 1985/1986
On The Cover Special – our very own OLIVER FREY occupies five pages. *Starquake* is mapped and there are some *Fairlight* pokes. We profile GARGOYLE GAMES. LLOYD looks back on 1985. ROGER KEAN talks to HEWSON CONSULTANTS. *Spellbound* gets top marks from the reviewers.

No 25 February 1986
DURELL – the profile, and some rather silly photos of the team. A chat with the MICROSPHERE duo. A double dose of JETMAN. GREMLIN GRAPHICS bring a *Ninja* to the Spectrum. TECH NICHE looks at a FORTH add-on and extensions to ZX BASIC. *Zoids* narrowly pips *Sweevo's World* in the reviews.



No 26 March 1986
HUNTER S chats to the Gals from ST BRIDE'S. A first look at the Spectrum 128. What's new on Micronet 800. ROMANTIC ROBOT's *Multiface One* under scrutiny. *Marsport* mega-map and a rather smaller diagram of *Gunfright*. *Three Weeks In Paradise, Movie,* and *Winter Games* are SMASHed.

No 27 April 1986
Massive 23 page Playing Tips Supplement – including *Zoids* and *Monty On The Run* maps. 1985 Readers Awards results. MEL CROUCHER interview. IMAGINE resurfaces and PALACE are quick on the draw. Round up of 128K games. A visit to the first Play By Mail convention. *Bomb Jack* wows the reviewers.

No 28 May 1986
Update on the Fanzine scene. MARTECH profile and *Planets* preview. DIY Composite Video Interface. *Spellbound* and *2112AD* mapped. Inside CHEETAH's *SpecDrum.* FRONTLINE Mini-Strategyback. CRASHTIONNAIRE '86 analysis. *Starstrike II* is top SMASH of the month.



No 29 June 1986
First PBM MAILBOX and CRASH GALLERY. *SpecDrum* listing. Homegrown software. HANNAH SMITH chats to REALTIME. Compilations compared. Maps of *Cylu, Sir Fred, Saboteur* and Parts 1 and 2 of *Tantalus.* The GENESIS, BIRTH OF A GAME feature gets underway.

No 30 July 1986
More CRASH/RAINBIRD gallery. More Homegrown Software. THE BIRTH OF A GAME: some early entries. Mr MINSON meets game designers TIGRESS. LUNA JETMAN returns. *Tantalus, Knight Tyme* and *Movie* mapped. *Ghosts And Goblins, Jack the Nipper* and *Splitting Images* receive the reviewers acclaim

No 31 August 1986
HANNAH goes wrestling and maps *Pentagram, Heavy on the Magick* and *Jack the Nipper* at the same time! A look into the *Dragon's Lair.* Sinclair 'LOKI' myths exploded. ERNIEWARE interview. PETE TAMLYN starts his look at Role Playing Computer games. Wordprocessor round-up.

No 32 September 1986
GAC reviewed. *The Music Box* opened. MIKRO-GEN's DAVE PERRY talks about *Wally* and *Ricky Steele.* Repairing your QUICKSHOT 2. *Dan Dare* arrives! *Bobby Bearing, Ghosts and Goblins, Core, Cyberun* and *Action Reflex* get the cartographic habit.

No 33 October 1986
JON RITMAN – Mr *Batman* and Mr *Match Day* tells all. The GENESIS project: the programming begins. HUNTER S MINSON goes missing! Multi-tracking *SpecDrum.* COSTA PANAYA, the man from VORTEX, interviewed. Maps of *Dan Dare* and *Cauldron II.* First part of *Equinox* and *Dynamite Dan II* maps.

No 34: November 1986
DON PRIESTLEY, creator of *Popeye* and *Trapdoor* interviewed. *Music Machine* reviewed. GAMES DAY report. CHEETAH's *Sound Sampler* sampled. PBM Diplomats Directory opened. GENESIS: *Kat Trap* preview - the Marketing Mix explained. *Equinox* and *Dynamite Dan II* maps completed; *Universal Hero,* and *Hijack* laid bare.

35: December 1986
DAN MALONE, the artist behind *Antiriad* interviewed. RAM ELECTRONICS release a ROM-based wordprocessor. *Glider Rider* and *Lightforce* maps revealed. MIDI interface examined. Spectrum Plus Two problems explained. *The Great Escape* heads a pack of smashes.

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WINNERS & PRIZES



RESULTS GALORE

What better way to start the New Year than with a spot of catching up? Although your faithful Minion sorted through all the entries for the competitions we ran in the November issue in good time, there wasn't room to print the results in the Christmas Special. Then, as soon as I came back from my over-short Christmas hols, it was time to sort through the piles of post that had arrived for the December competitions. So here's a bumper dose of results – and I'm off to soothe my sore competition-envelope-opening fingers in some cool mop bucket water . . .

PIRANHA'S TRAP DOOR OPENS

What a lot of scary creatures you showed me! I think the aversion therapy may have worked . . . A trio of monster creators collect a monster *Trapdoor* Goodiebag. They are:

Deniz Ahmet, Peckham, London, SE15 4NP; Brian M Mcdonough, Wythenshawe M23 9AW and S Kemp, Leigh-On-Sea SS9 2RG

Copies of *Trapdoor* go to 30 minor-monster creators:

Will Dyke, High Wycombe HP13 5LA; Chris Coonfell, Southampton SO3 2SD; Carl Jones, Birkenhead L49 9BS; Stewart Dean, Wt Lexham PE32 2SA; Paul Myatt, Stoke-On-Trent ST3 3EA; Darren Shaw, Nr Loddon, Norwich NR14 6SN; Richard Plastow, Hertford SG14 1PH; Vernon R Chaldecott, Havant PO9 2HR; C Llobet, Whitton TW2 7PQ; Jay Sachania, Milton Keynes MK13 7LT; J Le Gresley, Southsea PO5 2PG; Paul Hewett, Salisbury SP1 3EL; Richard Pepper, Nantwich CW5 5JP; Kevin Hooker, Upminster RM14 1QB; Darren Bonas, Walkergate NE6 4UL; Mr E Burton, Silsoe MK45 4HT; William Harbison, Auchinleck KA18 2EW; Howard Carlisle, Horsforth LS18 4HD; John Noble, Middlesborough TS5 6NJ; Christine Noble, Middlesborough TS5 6NJ; Lucas Sutton, Agar Grove Estate, London NW1; Peter Hill, Northampton NN3 3AJ; Jim McMullen, Edinburgh EH14 2QR; Gareth A Harron, Co Down, Northern Ireland BT19 1NZ; Darren Webb, Dagenham RM8 3SJ; Cathy McBurney, Marske-By-Sea TS11 7JG; Dylan Wyn Owen, Angelsey LL77 8YQ; David Blair, Lea DN21 5JE; Daniel Hartley, Maltby S66 7SE; C Lead, Chorley PR7 3NG.

CAULDRON COLLECTING

Cauldron-spotters flooded the broomcupboard with entries – not surprising seeing as MELBOURNE HOUSE were offering a complete set of ASTERIX books to the outright winner. He is:

P Abernethy of Rotherham, South Yorkshire S65 3BU

Copies of *Asterix and the Magic Cauldron* are on their way to 50 people who found all the bits but didn't acutally come top:

Jonathon Melling, Hindley WN2 4LB; Chris Jackson, Chesterfield S41 0EX; Simon Shirlow, Lisburn, Northern Ireland BT28 3PY; Ian Biddleston, Armthorpe DN3 3DG; John Clarke, Gainsborough DN21 1DW; Jason Nieman, Sutton Manor WA9 4DQ; Richard Cameron, Oxted RH8 0PB; Jamie Buchanan, Hook Norton OX15 5QG; Gary Houghton, Alsager ST7 2AS; Derek Mccall, Scotland FK10 3NT; Jason Venturi, South Harrow HA2 9BP; Paul Humphries, Kidderminster DY10 2TL; Tony O'Keeffe, Laindon SS15 5UB; Craig Haworth, Blackburn BB1 1PD; Robert Douglas, Mosfellssveit, Iceland; Emma Warman, Middlesborough TS5 7DB; S Jones, Chester-Le-Street DH3 3HY; Peter Scott, Skeg PE24 4SJ; Manuel Pina Cabral, 1700 Lisboa, Portugal; Gary Paul Smith, Eastchurch ME12 4DF; Richard Meek, Newcastle ST5 0LZ; Jeremy Hyde, Portadown, Northern Ireland BT63 5RA; George Weir, Port Glasgow PA14 54N; Jeremy Perrett, Bridgwater TA7 0PU; I W Osborne, Durham DH7 7ND; Grant Jolchard, Dyfed SA31 1RN; Tony Driffield, Mold CH7 6RZ; Daniel Lawton, Burnley BB12 0ED; Miss F Monteiro, London W10 5DF; Pedro Faia, Portugal, 2900 Setubal; Paul Costello, Finchley N12 0PC; Ian Mason, Latimer NN15 5SX; Adam Minister, Salford 6 M6 6RJ; Christopher Leap, Chorley PR7 3NG; Paul Garner, Stockton TS19 8XF; Graham Palmer, Bath BA3 2BL; Ian Doggett, Kirton IP10 0PD; Mike Byford, Haroldhill RM3 7TH; Stuart Chadwick, Bexhill TN39 5SH; Simon Woods, Market Deeping PE6 8DS; Mathew Adams, Great Yarmouth NR31 7PW; James Bradbury, Hindley WN2 3SF; Matthew Thompson, Golcar HD7 4RH; Chris Surgeoner, Cardonald G52 2EL; Kwok Ming Liu, West Molesey KT8 0QW; Mr J Petty, Reading RG6 1JS; R Bullivant, D Troop, BFPO 22; Jim Edwards, Kings Lynn PE30 2LT; Nicholas Hartley, Nunthorpe TS7 0LA; Dilpesh Patel, Clerkenwell EC1 QLR.

JUDO JAMBOREE

I've had to give up the Judo lessons – The Girlie Tipster threatened to take up Handbag Karate and try out all the moves on my battered form if I didn't! Still, MARTECH's judo game *Uchi Mata* should be along any day now, and maybe playing that will make me a bit tougher.

As soon as the game is finished, the following 50 people will be receiving a copy – don't get impatient now!:

Andrew Griffiths, West Croydon, Surrey CR0 3NN; S N Hammond, Frinton-On-Sea CO13 0PF; Stuart Anderson, Hull HU8 0ER; Danny Close, Waltham Abbey EN9 3EY; David Watters, Aberystweth SY23 2EU; Paul Smith, Stanford in the Vale SN7 8LY; CPL G Potter 8236, 17/21st Lancers, BFPO 17; Jonathon Hill, Great Amwell SG12 9RU; Peter Reilly, Glasgow G22 6DN; Andrew Kyle, Barrow in Furness LA1 42T; David Ho, London E5 0RN; EE Loon Lee, London N2 0DF; Robbie Morton, Norwich NR10 5AY; Simon J Ladds, Grantham NG31 9HH; Mark Boughton, Bury St Edmunds IP32 6BA; Neil Anthony, Nelson CF46 6LG; Simon Young, Mitcheldean GL17 0DN; Philip Mann, Cannock WS11 1PW; Paul Herbert, Chasetown WS7 8RE; Guy Daffern, Northwich CW8 3HP; Stuart Dickinson, Lowdenbeath KY4 9ND; Lee Powell-Thomas, Saltash PL12 4EA; Sac Carruthers, RAF North Coates, Lincs; James A Gosset, Ninfield TN33 9JX; Peter Bodkin, Clanfield PO8 0NR; Ranji Dhillon, St. Andrews KY16 8SF; Darren Shack, London E7 7HZ; R Lamb, Datchet SL3 9HP; Stephen Ovington, Pitcaple AB5 9HS; Patrick Walker, Nether Poppleton YO2 6LU; Jason Kan, Knaphill GU21 2HT; George Mackenzie, Dundee DD3 8LJ; Brian Morrison, Livingston EH54 5NT; Steven Moyle, Redruth TR15 3JN; Paul Smith, Sprowston NR7 8QA; Lars Janssen, Tintagel, Cornwall; Christopher Cousins, Brentwood CM15 9PU; Andrew Taylor, Teesville TS6 0AD; Gavin Dunkerley, Denbigy LL16 5YB; Graham Pye, Scotforth LA2 0RD; Jason Gibson, Tyne and Wear NE28 7EQ; Neil Parfrement, Clifton Estate NG11 9JB; Brian Banter, Ashton Under Lyne OL7 0SG; C Neterwood, Kirkella HU10 7QS; Michael Gravelle, London SE3 7PE; Mark Walters, Sutton-In-Ashfield NG17 4NP; John Spriggens, Gainsborough DN21 2DX; Andrew P Richards, Tredington CV36 49Q; David Jeremy, Bourne PE10 0RE; Richard Story, Tonwell SG12 0HP,

HANDBALL!

Now the judging's done, John Lewis, of Leicester LE4 7EL is due to get his hands on a ball – a spanking new football signed by the England squad no less. John came first in the little quiz organised in support of *Peter Shilton's Handball Maradonna*. The 50 runners up who all receive a copy of the game are:

Neil Harkett, Mendlesham, Suffolk; Peter Davies, Rayleigh SS6 9PE; Mrs V Fairbrother, Castle Gresley DE11 9LB; Richard Bradley, Bunny NG11 6QJ; Andrew Slack, Norwich NR4 6LB; Patrick Walsh, Langley SL3 8NX; Christopher Jolley, Sheffield S11 5BQ; Jonathon Ray, Knowle BS14 9AQ; Anton Lang, Croydon CRO 8SH; Justin Menhenett, East Preston BN16 1NE; Walter McMaw, Carrickfergus, County Antrim BT38 9LF; Brendan Holmes, Knibworth SG3 6NL; Alan Powis, Leominster HR6 8HT; Tony Gee, Sheffield S10 3PF; John Todd 'JNR', 110 Carlton Hill, Carlton NG4 1FN; Darren Spencer, Edgware HA8 8HQ; Ross Hunter, Carlisle CA2 7BY; D Prijs, Runcorn WA7 5EG; Stephen Mayhew, Seaham SR7 8LB; Nick Rushby, Sutton-On-Trent NG23 6QG; David McDermott, Birmingham B44 9LY; Darren Fairbrother, Castle Gresley DE11 9LB; Matthew Greaves, Worksop S81 0SJ; Tony Commons, Liden SN3 6LS; D Hulme, Farnworth BL4 0BZ; Graham Parker, Washington NE38 7LA; Luke Morgan, Middle Barton OX5 4HE; Paul Wreyford, Ruislip HA4 0TD; Greg Page, Haverhill CB9 8DW; Ryan Smith, Odd Down, Bath; Miles Jacobson, Watford WD1 5DF; Richard Parsons, Brierley Hill DY5 1AS; Stephen Barker, Hornchurch RM12 6AJ; Wayne Bradburn, Wolverhampton WV11 3JQ; John Fraher (Jnr), Ballinora, Ireland; Neil Sparrey, Northampton NN3 5BJ; Mark McGowan, Motherwell ML1 5JZ; Ian Francis, Coulsdon CR3 3HT; Martin Campbell, Edinburgh EH4 3RG; J Musk, Tunbridge Wells TN3 0EB; Iain Humber, Carlton NG4 1DF; Mike Stevenson, Poole; Marvin Reynolds, Crewe CW2 6JF; Keith Bell, Washington NE38 0PU; Darren Redfern, Golbourne WA3 3QZ; Robert Evans, Wolverhampton WV6 7BM; William Van Rest, Dorridge B93 8DN; Damian Highwood, Rainham ME8 9SS; Stephen Ball, Horringer IP29 5S2; David Jackson, Longton PR4 5PE.

SHAO LIN'S ROAD

After a false start, when an Art Minion set you a spot the difference competition without any differences to spot, we now have the official list of winners! Top of the pile was Guy D Curtis-Raleigh, of London who collects a martial arts suit, a copy of the book about the Shao Lin temple and his choice from the games offered by THE EDGE. Fifteen runners-up collect a copy of the book and their choice of game:

Brian Morris, Longhill, OL11 3QL; S J Vygh, Burholme Road, PR2 6HP; W E Leyland, St Chads Road, Lancs; S Glenn, Higham Ferrers, NN9 8ET; Darren Martin, Sycamore Avenue, PE1 4JU; Anthony Heeney, Friezland Close, SK15 3LG; Darren Walton, Blackburn Avenue, WV6 9JT; Kay Chidgey, Monsal Avenue, M7 0GX; G Gregorick, Station Road, NG23 6QF; Justin Baines, 'Stones, CT5 3LG; Colin Campbell, Holyknowe Crescent, G65 7DN; Steven Frazer, Fountains Close, NE38 7TF; John Nash, Elmdale Grove, SO51 6AX; Duncan Hardy, St Benets Road, NR12 9DN; Mark Hayward, Willow Drive, NP6 2EX.

And finally, 35 runners up each receive their choice of game:

Richard Heath, Colin McLean Road, NR19 2RY; Stephen Christie, Dunolly Street, G21; Daryl N Heaps, Verbena Avenue, BL4 0EN; James Cox, Bastwell House, BB1 9TY; Scott Davies, Charteruse House, OY14 0NA; David Malcolm, United Arab Emirates; Ian Barnett, Westonview Avenue, ST3 5DJ; Brian Grummitt, Farm Road, CW8 3NG; Mark Blackwell, Springwell Avenue, TS29 6QJ; Stuart Forbes, Ridge House, GL18 1JT; David Gill, Kendal Road, B11 1HA; George Gallamore, Essex Gardens, M30 5EE; Connor Carson, Park Avenue, BT21 0EB; Pat Walsh, Verney Road, SL3 8NX; Ian Simpson, Melville Road, PO12 4QX; Ryan Smith, Bognor Regis, PO22 9ET; Paulo Jorge Dos Santos, Lisboa, Portugal; S K Spratt, Hawkridge Roads, EX31 4BB; Ken Sigley, Walsall Road, WS6 6DN; Adrian Rossell, Hobart Drive, N99 8PX; Adam Kierski, Allerton Crescent, BS14 9PX; P Weenings, Donketbroek; Andrew Kinnear, Hadley Road, EN2 8JT; Craig Spencer, Westcroft Road, BD7 3EN; E De Jonge, Janhuddestr 2,1181 SH; Mark Robins, Summervale Road, TN4 8JB; S Collinge, Linnet Close, M34 5GZ; Rajesh Laxman, Kyotts Lake Road, B11 1JX; Paul Phillips, Nelson Street, SK14 1PD; Alex Symons, The Street, GL11 6DW; Charles Green, Shaftesbury Drive, S74 0DE; Gary Lacy, Brown Edge Road, SK17 7AT; Colin Bonfield, Wellington Crescent, BD18 3PH; Ray Speller, Lower Gardens, SG12 7EU; Lee Bristow, Roper House, SE21 8QB.

ABSORBING THE SHOCK

A DIY superhero should sproing into existence early in 1987 – if you live anywhere near Rainham in Essex, look out for Paul Ponting – he's collected a Superhero Kit from MARTECH which includes a pair of zoom binoculars and a compact 35mm camera. And all because he won the *Cosmic Shock Absorber* competition! *Cosmic* hasn't made an appearance in CRASH Towers yet, but at soon as he does we'll be sending copies of the game out the following 50 runners-up:

Jason Bullock, High Wycombe HP12 3UN; T J Shelley, Saltburn TS13 4LW; Ian Gillibrand, Formby L37 2DZ; Jonathon Higton, Sheffield Lane Top S5 7TH; Steven Vickers, Carsualton SM5 3DZ; Steven Sowter, Sutton-Asfield NG17 2BX; Scott McGlashan, Glasgow G4U 4RT; Bruce McCoubrie, Belfast BT5 7EW; Peter Robinson, Margate CT9 4NA; Paul Gibney, Woodburn, Co Antrim BT38 8HA; Gareth Clark, Ascot SL5 8TA; Alan Clark, Whitfield DD4 0JE; Darren Fairbrother, Castle Gresley DE11 9LB; Bruce McCoubrie, Belfast BT5 7EW; Rosie Smith, Southfields SW18 5LZ; Lee Hamnet, Stacksteads OL13 0SF; Richard Heath, East Dereham NR19 2RY; Greg Dougal, Cartmore FK8 3RW; Paul Bortlett, Cheshunt EN7 5QR; Paul Whiteley, Netherthorpe S3 7PW; Chris Evans, Ware SG12 0PY; K A Hungman, Bushey WD2 3ST; Martin Taylor, South Hornchurch RM12 5PA; David Calow, Worksop S80 2SH; Justin Hesketh, Beeston NG9 2HG; Jonathon Moffit, Hexham NE46 3BJ; Christopher Green, Droitwich WR9 8PE; P Redington, Morden SM4 5AJ; Jose Pedro Meireles Ferreir, 4400 VN Gaia, Portugal; Rachael Pugh, Cardiff CF5 4AB; Paul Longhurst, Tring HP23 4ED; Robert Doe, Bournemouth BH10 5EW; Scott Stalham, Stopsley Drive LU2 9RB; Daniel Boon, Holland, 1054 HL; Maarten Karel, Holland, 3813 KM; Wayne Miller, Bloxwich WS3 3HD; Paul Grallacher Glasgow, G31 2Q4; Luke S Cobb, Hove BN3 5DN; Howard Carlisle, Horsforth LS18 4HD; Raymond Johnson, London W14; Spencer James, Swanley BR8 8AR; Darren Stephens, Walsall WS1 4EJ; Kenson Low, Wembley HA0 3RG; T Savvas, London N19 5DP; Cheryl Spencer, South Benfleet SS7 5JH; Sam Morgan, Cardiff CF1 9JS; Colin Newman, Chesterfield S40 2HH; Richard Hotchkin, Broxbourne EN10 7LN; Simon Betts, Woodgreen N22 6AB; Andrew Olive, Macclesfield SK10 3HD.



DESIGN A SKIMMER

What a bunch of inventive people you are! All we've got to do now is see if the Ludlow Blacksmiths can knock up prototypes of a few of your designs and we'll have the ultimate company vehicle. We'll put CRL's name on one side and *Academy* on the other, in honour of the competition that produced the winning design. This particular winner collects a compact disk player, and he's called:

Paul Simcox, from Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B75 5NX

Furthermore, 50 runners up are set to collect a copy of *Academy* . . .

Kenson Low, Wembley HA0 3RG; Nicholas Wriglesworth, Blean CT2 9HR; Jonathon Beech, Bassaley NP1 9PD; Alan Jones, Wrexham LL12 8LT; C G White, Upper Beeding, West Sussex BN4 3JR; T Waggett, South Shields NE34 0PY; Marc Crowther, Upton L49 6NR; Rodney Hunt, Bridport DT6 4PB; Christopher Green, Droitwich WR9 8PE; Huw Bucknell, Goole DN14 9HT; Thomas McCrobie, Kincaidston KA7 3XE; Martin McKinney, Bournemouth BH6 4DQ; Gary Haden, Skipton BD23 2TN; K A Hungman, Bushey WD2 3ST; Daniel Ashmore, Plymouth PL2 4BT; Howard Carlisle, Horsforth LS18 4HD; Graham Langley, Warminster BA12 9DE; Brian Steele, Tranent EH33 2NF; Spencer Gore, Reading RG8 7DU; Brendan Judge, Formby L37 2YY; Steven Trott, Halifax HX4 8BL; Luke Gietzen, London SE23 3QN; Paul Kirby, Exeter EX5 3EE; Richard Pugsley, Penn WV4 4BQ; T Nuttall, Cottingham HV16 4DS; Brian Moloney, Crawley RH11 0PG; David Edge, Telford TF7 5RX; Paul Durkin, Exmouth EX8 4PX; Graeme Wilkinson, Bishop Auckland DL14 6PL; Andrew McMenamin, Chesterfield S40 2NB; Neil Dallimore, Deeside CH5 3LB; Paul Skilton, Warlingham CR3 9EW; Richard Stead, Walton WF2 6LF; Matthew Ayres, Southminster CM0 7DF; Darran Regan, Stockport SK2 7LU; S Jones, Kidderminster DY10 3QS; Stephen Cheatley Blackpool, FY4 3DW; Lee Bristow, Kingswood Estate SE21 8QB; David Jackson, Longton PR4 5PE; Gareth Owen, Craigavon, Northern Ireland BT65 4AB; Richard Hotchkin, Broxbourne EN10 7LN; M Furtado, London N3 2HN; Bruce McCoubrie, Belfast, Northern Ireland BT5 7EW; John Smith, Scotland FK16 6HT; David Wheller, Kenilworth CV8 1AQ; Paul Greenough, Radcliffe M26 9GZ; Antony Layzell, Workington CA14 3JF; Anthony Stamp, Portslade BN4 2PF; James Bownass, Coulsdon CR3 3H6; Andrew Wood, Richmond DL10 5DA.

LONDON TOWN

The delectable Julia from HEWSON will soon be travelling the streets of London with Mark Smith from Tupsley near Hereford because his correct entry was first out of the bag in the *City Slicker* competition draw. He's a winner! A further 50 winners are about to receive a copy of the game by way of consolation:

Roger McGilvray, Cumbernauld G67 1PA; C Warren, Hertford SG14 3TQ; Carmel Battersby, Scale Hall, Lancaster; Alan Colliar, Lockerbie DG11 3PQ; Thomas Gammon, Swansea SA1 4QJ; Mr Eamonn Moyles, London W9 3DG; Marc Pennington, Pittenweem, Fife; Master Peter Banks, Carnoustie DDY YDE; Chris Dymond, Truro TR1 1QB; Stephen Fisher, West Drayton UB7 9DU; Paul Greenough, Radcliffe M26 9GZ; Simon Round, Stockton TS19 7ST; Philip King, Ludlow SY8 3NX; I Andrews, London SW20 8FG; Roger Green, Wakefield WF2 7EB; Charlie Morgan, Addiscombe CR0 6ET; Colin Reekie, St.Monans, Fife KY10 2DH; Gareth Blythe, Chelmsford CM2 6BG; Neil Blake, Carlton, Nottingham NG4 1ER; Joe Leist, Addlestone KT15 2TL; Phillip Bennett, Grantham NG33 4BL; Greig Christie, Kirkcaldy KY1 3RA; James Pratt, Ashby-de-la-Zouch LE6 5TW; David Bone, Hebburn NE31 2JF; Mr N Knowles, Southminster CM0 7BB; Andrew Bezant, Croughton NN13 5LT; Paul Wakeling, Groby LE6 0DE; B Cheeseman, Penhill SN2 5LW; Mr Stewart Croft, Lancaster LA1 4QZ; Keith Wallace, Sheffield S11 7LG; Steven Surridge, Isle of Wight PO33 3QY; A Challen, Rushden NN10 9BG; S W Smith, Stockton TS19 7LJ; Nigel Rubery, Pontefract WF8 2SJ; Kevin Hood, Seaham SR7 7ER; Trevor Homfray-Cooper, Ware SG12 7DD; Christopher Barber, Garforth, Leeds LS25 1JD; Tony Gee, Sheffield S10 3PF; Tony Goodey, Romford RM5 2EJ; Lee McGill, Ilford IG2 6AU; M S Wyre, Birmingham B34 6AH; I J Welton, Carlisle CA1 2AN; A Thorpe, Seaham SR7 7JD; Robert Fearon, Ellesmere Port L65 2DT; Lloyd Robertson, Reepham NR10 4E6; Anon, Lower Bevendean, Brighton BN2 4GE; Matthew Crivelli, Yeovil BA21 5XB; Ian Francis, Coulsdon CR3 3HT; S Kathiravelu, New Malden KT3 6NY; Andrew Judge, Leyland PR5 1BH.

YOU SAVED DAN AND DIGBY!

Lots of people completed Oli's Dan Dare strip for him, and after much deliberation the top two prizes in the competition we ran with VIRGIN go to:

Wayne Trauis, of Northway, Tewkesbury GL20 8RW and Les Brown, of Ossett, West Yorks WF5 0QD

They both collect a copy of *Dan Dare* the game, a poster, a T Shirt, a copy of *The Man Who Drew Tomorrow* and the choice of either five albums or three videos from VIRGIN's catalogue.

Meanwhile, three more people collect a copy of the game, T Shirt, and poster:

Simon Brett, Poughill, Bude, EX23 9HB; Robert Bryan, Cheadle, Hulme, SK8 6DF and Jared Smith, Saltburn-By-The-Sea, Cleveland, TS12, 1PD

Finally, 25 runners collect the game and a poster:

Ciaran Montague, Crevenagh, Northern Ireland BT79 0EU; Pascal Don, Surbiton KT5 8DF; Mathew Ayres, Southminster CM0 7DF; Thomas Lennon, Birmingham B44 8LB; Mathew Maloney, Shepshed LE12 9AR; Nicholas Wriglesworth, Blean CT2 9HR; Matthew Smith, Penichell ST4 7EH; S Brown, Walthamstow E17 4AR; Vincent Rosenberg Sapochnik, London N8 9LG; Andrew Price, Tyldesley M29 7HA; Stephen Ward, Shannon, Co Clare, Eire; Jamie Hill, Richmond TW9 4JF; John Lewis, Kilmun PA23 8SE; John Mullen, Dovecot L14 0NU; Khalid, London NW2 6LA; John Potter and Mum, Lurkhall BA1 6TQ; Ian Moore, Belfast BT4 3BJ; Ewan Mapplebeck, Folkestone CT19 5RT; Jon Gill, Sedgley DY3 3EA; Mark Harrison, St Albans AL2 3HN; Derek Sloan, Burdon Village SR3 2PX; David John Jackson, Longton PR4 5PE; J Singh (Mr), Hadley TF1 4PN; Dylasn Wyn Owen, Anglesea LL77 8YX; Tanvir Hanif, Barry CF6 8HD

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2	
3	
4	
5	

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T SHIRT SIZE ....

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TITLE	PRODUCER
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

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MATCH DAY CHALLENGE

A while ago, our Doc Martened Editor was interviewing JON RITMAN, the man behind *Batman*. During the interview, CHRIS CLARKE called round to see Jon, and the conversation turned to their classic football game *Match Day*.

Clearly, Jon and Chris rather fancied themselves as *Match Day* players — they while away hours playing the game, and are often joined by BERNIE DRUMMOND, the graphics genius who works with Jon.

Calling their bluff, the Ed proposed a MATCH DAY CHALLENGE, where the programmers would meet the best on-screen footballers CRASH could provide. They agreed. An appeal for top-notch players appeared in the magazine, entries were sifted and a shortlist drawn up. The date was set, and one rainy day last year the programmers and challengers travelled to Ludlow from the four corners of England.

This is their story . . .



THE CHALLENGERS

1 Paul Johns
2 Joe Waldron
3 Steve Bayliss
4 Mike Sutton
5 Steve Cartlidge
6 Adam Harrison

ONE RAINY DAY IN NOVEMBER . . .

An impressive array of footballing talent gathered in the function room of the Starline Club. Adam Harrison had travelled all the way from Dewsbury to take part in the day's events, chauffeured by his father. Paul Johns had made the trip from Wokingham in deepest Berkshire with Mark Gillard, his self-appointed coach and trainer. Steven Bayliss was accompanied by a team of supporters – his family had decided to make a day of it, and chartered a minibus to get them from Porth in Mid Glamorgan. Cheshire, or more precisely Malpas, was represented by Mike Sutton, and Birmingham's contender, Steve Cartlidge brought his parents and sister for moral support.

Nervous glances were exchanged by these five contestants as they tried to ascertain each other's footballing prowess. The buffet wasn't given a second glance – the rigours of travel combined with pre-match nerves meant no-one was hungry. The sixth man, Joe Waldron – founder of a short-lived magazine called MDAS (short for *Match Day Appreciation Society*) wasn't there – had he been overcome by last-minute nerves or was he deliberately winding up his opponents? The tension mounted.

Three tables against a wall each groaned under the weight of a monitor, computer, and cassette deck. *Match Day*'s loading screen appeared on three monitors and a pair of empty chairs was in front of each table. Cameron Pound could be heard setting up his studio flash gear in the adjoining room, and flashes of blue light illuminated the playing area as he made the final adjustments. The coffee percolator in the midst of the buffet burbled its annoyance at being ignored – or was it the rumblings of a nervous challenger's stomach?

Then the programmers made their entrance. Jon Ritman had driven Bernie Drummond and Chris Clarke up from London that morning and arrived clutching a cushion "for the back trouble" and a carrier bag containing favourite joysticks. Still no sign of Joe Waldron – was he pushing gamesmanship too far?

First panic of the day was caused amongst the assembled CRASH Minions when Jon spotted that only one Spectrum sported an Interface 2. The trio of programmers are all confirmed joystick wielders – "what if we have to play someone who doesn't like using keys" Jon asks. A hurried audit of the CRASH peripherals cupboard begins and then someone decides to ask the contestants an obvious question: fortunately it is only the programmers who prefer joysticks – everyone else is happiest using keys. First organisational panic over . . .

No sign of Joe Waldron though.

THE RULES OF PLAY

With or without Mr Waldron, it was time to explain the ground rules and start the contest. It had been ordained that the challenge was to take place on a league basis, with contestants playing each programmer in a match of ten minutes each-way. Three points would be earned for a win, one point for a draw and nothing for losing. If there was a tie on points after all the CRASH challengers had played their three games, a playoff would decide the overall CRASH champion. The champion would then play each programmer once more in a game lasting five minutes each-way and a final league table drawn up to rank the three programmers and the CRASH champion.

Everyone understood. Except Joe Waldron – perhaps he wasn't coming after all. The draw was made and the fixture list for five rounds of challenger/programmer games drawn up.



Paul Johns and Chris Clarke get to grips with some on-screen action in Round One. Paul went on to inflict a 5-2 defeat on Chris – the first of many. Well, six, to be accurate . . .

PLAY BEGINS

As the players took station in front of the Spectrums, with Steve Cartlidge playing Ritman, Mike Sutton challenging Drummond and Paul Johns taking on Clarke, the audience settled into the stands. A hushed, reverential air pervaded the room. The coffee percolator gurgled petulantly again. Still, no-one had dared approach the refreshments. Families and supporters looked on, taking their opportunity to size up the playing skills of the programmers and the other CRASH readers.

As the first three games came to a close, tension mounted and then subsided quickly when the results were announced. The players were able to stand down from the eagle-eyed gaze of an intense audience and relax for a while. Ritman and Drummond had got off to a cracking start, striking fear into the hearts of all contestants with a 5-1 and 7-0 victory respectively. Clarke, who went 2-5 down to Paul, proved that programmers were not superhuman beings after all. Clarke muttered gently about Drummond having pinched his favourite joystick for the Challenge. . . .

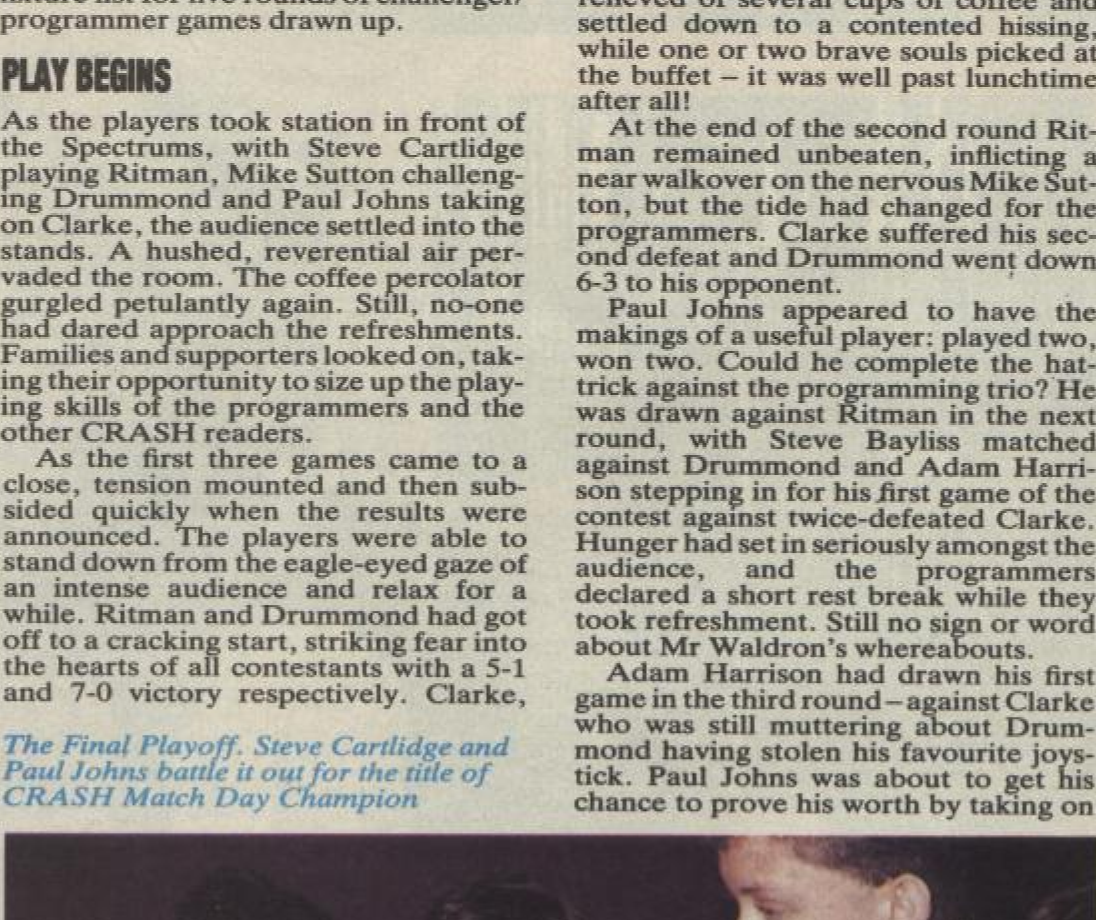
Steve Cartlidge was able to sit the next round out, leaving Mike Sutton and Paul Johns to take on Ritman and Drummond respectively. Steve Bayliss stepped up to play Clarke. During this second match the tension in the room began to disappear. The percolator was relieved of several cups of coffee and settled down to a contented hissing, while one or two brave souls picked at the buffet – it was well past lunchtime after all!

At the end of the second round Ritman remained unbeaten, inflicting a near walkover on the nervous Mike Sutton, but the tide had changed for the programmers. Clarke suffered his second defeat and Drummond went down 6-3 to his opponent.

Paul Johns appeared to have the makings of a useful player: played two, won two. Could he complete the hat-trick against the programming trio? He was drawn against Ritman in the next round, with Steve Bayliss matched against Drummond and Adam Harrison stepping in for his first game of the contest against twice-defeated Clarke. Hunger had set in seriously amongst the audience, and the programmers declared a short rest break while they took refreshment. Still no sign or word about Mr Waldron's whereabouts.

Adam Harrison had drawn his first game in the third round – against Clarke who was still muttering about Drummond having stolen his favourite joystick. Paul Johns was about to get his chance to prove his worth by taking on

The Final Playoff. Steve Cartlidge and Paul Johns battle it out for the title of CRASH Match Day Champion



Ritman, and Steve Bayliss went forward against Drummond. And then, shortly after the kick-off . . . the mysterious Joe Waldron arrived! Consultation began with the organisers, and a sixth round was added to the league so that Joe could join in. The audience was tucking into the buffet with a vengeance (and was mysteriously swelled by the greater part of the Art Department who descended en masse from their garret in the Towers after hearing rumours of a free lunch.)

Sadly, Paul Johns succumbed to Ritman's onslaught and failed to make the hat-trick, but at the end of the third round he was still in the lead having played two games and lost one. Adam started out by beating Clarke (hadn't everyone?) and Drummond used the stolen joystick to good effect, notching up another victory.

Round Four saw Steve up against the demon Ritman, Adam playing his second game, this time against Drummond, and Steve Cartlidge returning to the arena hoping to collect a win against Clarke. Everyone else had, after all . . . And true to form, Ritman inflicted yet another defeat and Clarke managed to avoid winning.

As the final round in the main non-Waldron League began, Paul Johns remained in the lead. Although Mike Sutton had drawn Clarke and looked set to win the match, he had already lost two games and was out of the running, as was Steve Bayliss. Adam Harrison was still in with a chance – if he could beat the demon Ritman., Steve Cartlidge needed a victory over Drummond to go forward to a playoff with Paul.

Once again, Ritman and Clarke kept to their form, and so Mike and Adam dropped out of the running. Steve Cartlidge fought a close battle with Drummond, finally securing a 5-4 victory and setting himself up for a playoff with Paul Johns.

The challenge was far from over, however. The Waldron Round remained to be played – could this late arrival, playing firmly in extra time, manage to pull off two victories against the three programmers and earn himself a place in the playoff? Nobody was surprised when Ritman strolled to victory against Joe. Drummond, however conceded a 3-2 defeat, and if Clarke kept to his form it looked like Joe would be joining Steve and Paul in a three-way playoff.

Disaster struck for Joe, however. Clarke managed to win his first game of the day, 6-3 no less, so the latecomer's bid for glory was ended. It was time to stage the playoff between Steve and Paul – a single game of fifteen minutes each way. . . .

The Challenge Final between Steve Cartlidge and Paul Johns was indeed a marathon game – half an hour of serious keyboard pounding would be enough to test the stamina of any Match Day player, especially after the tension and effort of competing in a league. Gradually Steve began to edge into the lead, and then Paul's game seemed to collapse for a while allowing Steve to hammer a handful of goals into the net.

By the end of the Final, Steve had built up an eight goal lead, clearly setting himself up as THE CRASH MATCH DAY CHAMPION with a 13-5 victory.

But before the presentation of a bottle of bubbly and the official photosession, the new CRASH Champion had to play the three programmers once more to provide a definitive analysis of his performance against the byte merchants.

No doubt Steve was exhausted, coming straight from a marathon playoff into a trio of consecutive games, so he may well have lost his peak form. Nevertheless he gave a good account of himself, scoring three goals against Ritman but conceding six and losing 4-1 to Drummond before pasting Clarke (traditional, by this stage of the day) 5-3.

THE FINAL ANALYSIS

The programmers and the CRASH MATCH DAY Champion had played seven games each by the end of the afternoon. Here's how they shaped up in the Super League:

Steve Cartlidge	**4**	**0**	**3**	**33**	**30**	**12**	**−3**
Chris Clarke	**1**	**0**	**6**	**24**	**33**	**3**	**−9**
Bernie Drummond	**4**	**0**	**3**	**30**	**22**	**12**	**+8**
Jon Ritman	**7**	**0**	**0**	**38**	**14**	**21**	**+24**

ROUND ONE			
RITMAN	5	STEVEN CARTLIDGE	1
DRUMMOND	7	MIKE SUTTON	0
CLARKE	2	PAUL JOHNS	5
ROUND TWO			
RITMAN	10	MIKE SUTTON	1
DRUMMOND	3	PAUL JOHNS	6
CLARKE	2	STEVEN BAYLISS	3
ROUND THREE			
RITMAN	3	PAUL JOHNS	1
DRUMMOND	4	STEVEN BAYLISS	3
CLARKE	3	ADAM HARRISON	5
ROUND FOUR			
RITMAN	4	STEVEN BAYLISS	3
DRUMMOND	6	ADAM HARRISON	4
CLARKE	3	STEVEN CARTLIDGE	6
ROUND FIVE			
RITMAN	6	ADAM HARRISON	2
DRUMMOND	4	STEVEN CARTLIDGE	5
CLARKE	5	MIKE SUTTON	6
SUPPLEMENTARY WALDRON ROUND			
RITMAN	4	JOE WALDRON	3
DRUMMOND	2	JOE WALDRON	3
CLARKE	6	JOE WALDRON	3

END OF SEASON

As the Super League table shows, Jon Ritman truly plays a formidable game: he finished with a goal average of +24 and seven wins to his credit. Worthy of promotion for the next season.

Steve Cartlidge and Bernie Drummond both played consistently well, level-pegging on points. Bernie's slight advantage in terms of Goal Average sneaks him into second place above Steve.

But Chris Clarke, deprived of his favourite joystick or not, turned in a very poor showing on the day, losing six of his games and ending up with a measly three points and a goal average of -9 to his credit. Relegated.



Jon Ritman waits for the champagne cork to pop while Bernie and Chris point at the new champion

	Won	Drawn	Lost	Goals For	Goals Against	Points	Goal Average
CONTESTANTS							
Steve Bayliss	**1**	**0**	**2**	**9**	**10**	**3**	**−1**
Steve Cartlidge	**2**	**0**	**1**	**12**	**12**	**6**	**0**
Adam Harrison	**1**	**0**	**2**	**11**	**15**	**3**	**−4**
Paul Johns	**2**	**0**	**1**	**12**	**8**	**6**	**+4**
Mike Sutton	**1**	**0**	**2**	**11**	**15**	**3**	**−4**
Joe Waldron	**1**	**0**	**2**	**9**	**12**	**3**	**−3**
PROGRAMMERS							
Chris Clarke	**1**	**0**	**5**	**21**	**28**	**3**	**−7**
Bernie Drummond	**3**	**0**	**3**	**26**	**21**	**9**	**+5**
Jon Ritman	**6**	**0**	**0**	**32**	**11**	**18**	**+21**

MATCH DAY CHALLENGE



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Without doubt, Judge Dredd is the meanest judge in the meanest city in the world. He's no ordinary 'judge', sitting on a comfy chair in a panelled courtroom wearing a silly wig. He's out on the streets dispensing justice and in the year 2000 those streets are really mean.

The cities of America have sprawled far and wide. The biggest of these awesome conurbations (LMLWD) is Mega-City 1, and Judge Dredd is the toughest lawgiver in town – he makes Cobra look like a social worker.

The Judges try to keep order despite the escalating crime figures among the bored, teeming millions. Criminals are known as 'perpetrators', or 'perps' for short and Judges dispense the law ruthlessly using their multi-purpose guns. Judge Dredd has a reputation: if a 'perp' sees him coming, there's generally no resistance – the bad guys usually give up without a struggle or end up dead.

At CRASH Towers, law is dispensed not with a Dredd-style Lawgiver, but with a well-timed boot from a Doc Marten! Usually placed in the rear of your toiling Comps Minion . . .

It's just not fair. All I did was go over to IPC Towers where the great 2000AD comic, in which Judge Dredd appears, is put together. To get a feel for what was going on with this competition, your humble Comps Minion travelled all the way down to London and ascended the giddy heights of Kings Reach Tower, where IPC's artists do their thing.

In the art department, the nice Art Droid, Steve Dillon was explaining how they drew the frames and put the comic together. Unfortunately, there was this bottle of Tipp-ex just sitting there on the drawing board, and guess who just happened to knock the bottle over whilst gazing with awe as the cartoon took shape before his eyes? As you can see, from the results shown here, the Tipp-ex splattered all over the speech bubbles.

Naturally, as the deadline for that issue was about ten minutes away, those nice people at 2000AD started to turn a mite nasty. So, pausing only to grab the now ruined artwork, I legged it for the door. When I got back to Ludlow, the Publishing Wrath was great as I explained what had happened. I still can't sit down.

Help me out, dear reader. Use your imagination and restore the captions to their former glory. As you can see, this empty-bubble strip is part of a story about the confrontation between the great man himself, Judge Dredd, and another Judge who looks like he's made just one visit too many to Otto Sump's Ugly Clinic. Either that or, going by the logo on his helmet, Clint Eastwood/ Dirty Harry is still alive and kicking in the year 2000 and looking for a spot of relaxation after his tenth term as Mayor of Carmel.

The best wordsmith is going to win a truly unique prize; MELBOURNE HOUSE will arrange for one of the 200AD Art Droids to produce a portrait of the winner dressed as a Mega-City Judge. And the winner can choose which droid is to do the portrait from the following list: Cam Kennedy, Steve Dillon, Darry Kitson, John Higgins, Ian Gibson, Cliff Robinson, Brendan McCarth and Ron Smith. Naturally, MELBOURNE HOUSE are going to throw in a copy of the game and a Dredd T Shirt.

Two runners-up stand to collect the Judge Dredd Annual for 1987, the Judge Dredd board game, the T Shirt and a copy of the Spectrum game. Finally, ten runners-up will collect the computer game on its own. Check out the preview in this Issue . . .

Use your best handwriting and whizz your words in to me at **JUDGE DREDD, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB** making sure they arrive before 28th February. If you can't fit your captions into the bubbles, jot them down on a piece of paper, indicating clearly where the words go in the drawing.



TECH NICHE

VIDEOFACE TO FACE



Going all dotty on digitisers a couple of issues back led Franco Frey to fame, recognition but no fortune. Not that anyone mistook him for Lesley Anne Down or Marlene Dietrich, but the arrival of a small parcel covered in Dutch postage stamps showed him that Big Brother is watching and reading.

Thinking about late Christmas presents, he unpacked the gift. He didn't find After Eights or Black Magic, but an insignificant looking black box . . . immediately recognisable as a Spectrum add-on. In fact, it was of the variety of video digitisers, previously rare and unknown creatures, now suddenly popping out of all sorts of nooks and crannies.

VIDEOFACE

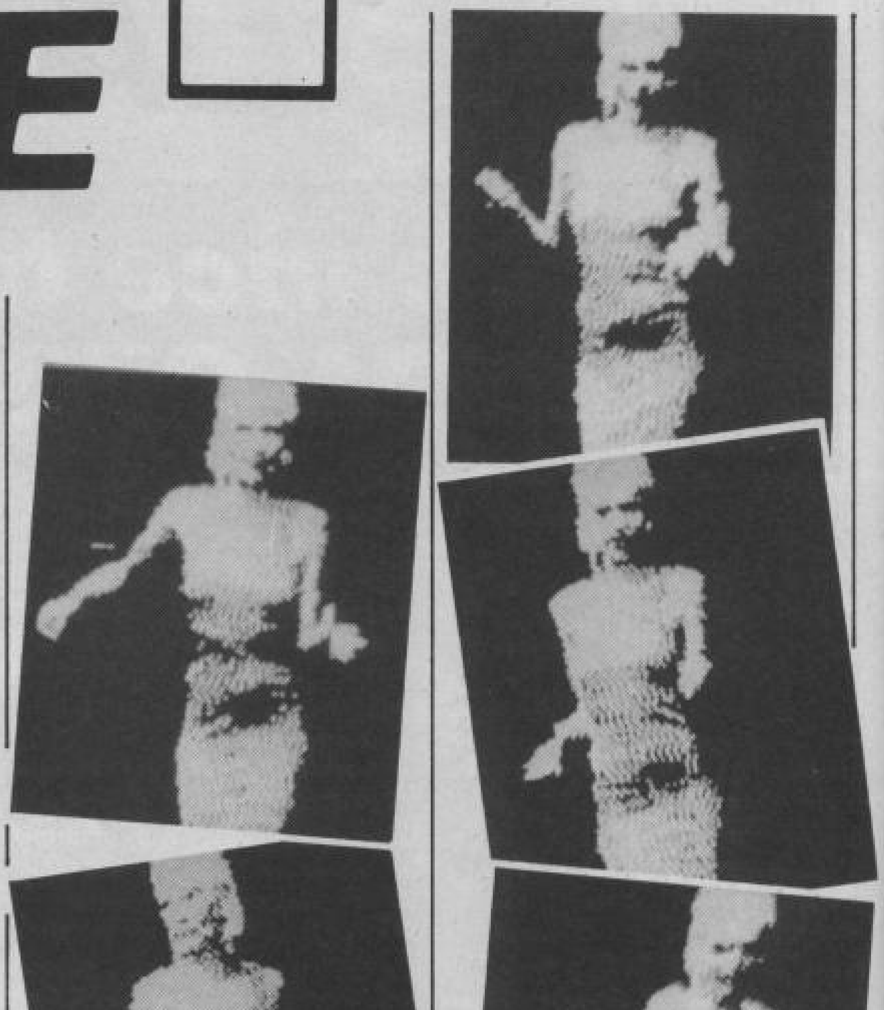
Producer: DATA Skip
Price: £69.00 inc VAT/P&P

One quick look at the manual reveals a great deal about the author's English, but little about the *Videoface*. After the usual prod and thrust, the interface was married to my now not-so-new Spectrum Plus, which has developed the disturbing habit of violently rejecting incompatible interface partners. Not so in this case. The *Videoface* should happily co-exist with such venerable species as the Spectrum 16K/48K, Spectrum Plus, 128 and Spectrum Plus Two, although experiments were not made to prove all these bold statements!

Clearly, *Videoface* is not going to perform unless it is connected to a video camera or at least a video recorder . . . as no hardware was supplied to make the connections, I pinched a competitor's accessory left over from an earlier review and made the appropriate connections. As life isn't worth living without software, I loaded up a short program from the tape supplied with the unit and thanked God it wasn't recorded in Dutch . . .

The menu reveals the most outstanding feature of *Videoface* – animation. Could this really be? Was this the breakthrough that everybody had been waiting for? Was Marlene Dietrich going to perform on the Spectrum?
optimised on speed and the result is a conversion period of only 16 non-interlaced TV screens, which means a scan speed of only 320 milliseconds. At this rate, over three digitised screens can be generated per second, which takes the user into the realm of animation. The effect is quite staggering, considering the massive limitations of the Spectrum.

Choosing the right subject is the main problem, as two aspects have to be carefully considered. One is the low resolution of the Spectrum screen – so avoid pictures with too much detail. Go for close-ups and uncluttered screens. Secondly, avoid fast-moving sequences: consider that the old 8mm home-movie cameras operated at 18 pictures per second – still six times faster than the *Videoface* – and you start realising the limitations. Try to avoid panning shots or zoom movements. As the digitised picture is generated over a period of 16 TV pictures, any major change or movement creates a distorted and meaningless digitised end product.



It's rock'n'roll time, as seen through the VIDEOFACE

MARLENE DIETRICH LIVE FROM THE BLUE ANGEL

The video screen consists of 625 lines and for a flicker-free display, it is scanned 25 times a second. In the days when standards were laid down, the frequency of the picture signal was seen to be beyond the limits of technology, with the high line resolution and 625 lines. It was decided to divide the full screen into two consecutive scans of 312.5 lines, with the first scan defining 'odd' numbered lines and the second defining the 'even'. The two scans give an interlaced display of 625 lines when viewed by the human eye.

Most computers do not have interlaced displays, and their maximum resolution is only 312 lines or less. This means that if an individual half-screen is to be digitised and stored, it must be done within 20 milliseconds. To be able to record an individual TV frame, a very fast analogue-to-digital converter is required (a flash A/D converter) which measures the voltage level of the video signal and converts the value into a binary number ready for storage in memory. The main problem is that these converters cost an arm and

a leg. That's alright for special effects as seen on Top Of The Pops, where the video editing system works with full resolution screen storage to provide fantastic screen manipulations, but it's not so good for home computers.

'Home' digitisers work with slow A/D converters which require a frozen picture, as the conversion of the screen requires several scans and can last up to several seconds. The SUNSET digitiser reviewed a couple of issues back took nearly six seconds, but stored each point as a nibble – a half byte – giving a grey scale from 1 to 15. When displayed on the computer screen, the black to white boundary could be set anywhere between 1 and 15. Furthermore, using up to three different stippling effects, a grey scale effect could be arranged, giving a remarkably lifelike image despite the low resolution.

With *Videoface* DATA SKIP optimised on speed and the result is a conversion period of only 16 non-interlaced TV screens, which means a scan speed of only 320 milliseconds. At this rate, over three digitised screens can be generated per second, which takes the user into the realm of animation. The effect is quite staggering, considering the massive limitations of the Spectrum.

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CAMERAS ROLLING?

The modus operandi is quite simple. Pressing the Q key initiates the picture scanning and *Videoface* deposits six screens, in rotation, within a defined screen buffer area of memory. *Videoface* also displays the screens on the Spectrum and the animation effect can be studied. As the Spectrum screen is limited to 256 by 192 pixels, the entire TV screen can't be fitted into the digitised format – the digitising frame may be positioned anywhere on the TV screen, using the cursor keys.

When you're satisfied with the last six displayed screens, pressing the Z or SPACE key interrupts the scanning operation and the last six screens are retained intact within the buffer memory. They are now available for display by single-stepping or for animation at variable speed. The rate of display can be stepped up to create a quick-motion effect. The screen on display can be copied or saved to tape.

As far as speed is concerned, the *Videoface* clearly knocks pixels off the SUNSET digitiser. But all is not well. The digitised screen is stored on a pixel basis in memory, and grey-scaling values are lost forever. The trigger point between black and white is controlled by hardware, and is adjusted by twiddling a potentiometer knob on the interface during conversion time. Once material has been stored, changes can't be made – stippling effects can't be generated.

The net result is a comparative loss in picture quality. A picture captured by SUNSET's equipment with grey stippling effect can be much better than a *Videoface*-generated picture. So it's take your pick – animation or improved picture quality?

Videoface is fun to use, but it has some peculiar quirks. It is quite annoying to have the mini-menu blinking over the picture you're trying to view when using the single-step mode. A more serious matter is that the program does not seem to be crash-proof. In fact, whenever a picture is saved to tape the program decides to go off on its own and leave the operator in a slightly animated state – especially when the intention was to save all six screens to tape! Naturally, the only solution is to reset the computer and lose the contents of the screen buffer.

Similarly, during conversion the program has been known to wander off. It happens to the best of us . . . The software consists of a mixture of BASIC and machine code that takes up about 1300 bytes starting at location 63232. The area between BASIC and machine code can only be used by switching animation off (an option in the main menu), otherwise this area is used to store the six screens.

The manual lists *Videoface* compatible interfaces which can be operated without interference.

CONCLUSION

A very enjoyable add-on for the Spectrum, which can provide hours and hours of entertainment. I still haven't found any serious use for a digitiser, but that, to my mind, is not very important. Make sure you have a video camera or a video recorder with a good still frame facility if you're after good still shots.

I'll end by quoting the excellent manual, which sums up all aspects of the *Videoface* in a short and concise way:

Now you can using the DATA-SKIP Videoface pour signal from the analogue world into a digital dress.

Interested image-grabbers can acquire the *Videoface* from **DATA SKIP, Lange Willemsteeg 10, 2801 Gouda, Holland**

COMPLIMENTing the SPECTRUM?

SAGA SYSTEMS are well known for their attempts to change your meagre little Spectrum PCB into something that looks twice the price and feels three times as important – now SAGA have leapt into the Spectrum marketplace with a new batch of goodies for the more serious user: The *SAGA Compliment*.

SAGA have collected what they think is the best hardware from all over the Spectrum world, found some complementing software and bundled it all together. When added to a Spectrum PCB and TV/ monitor, this becomes the complete executive package for those who want something more than a games machine.

DOMINIC HANDY, our resident word-processor reviewer, takes a look at the collection of equipment and software available for £343.85 including VAT.



The front-end menu that heads up the COMPLIMENT package

THE BRAINS . . .

The heart of any computer system is the controlling software – it must be easy to use, yet powerful enough to push the hardware to its limits. The *Compliment* system does its best to fulfil both of these requirements. Once you've connected all your hardware together, all you have to do is turn on, insert the system disk and press RUN (oh, and ENTER). That's it, you are now in the *Compliment Operating Environment (COE)*: you never need know how your computer works. This makes the *Compliment* System perfect for anyone that wants the power of a computer without the hassles of programming. In the *COE* you are presented with a series of menus and sub-menus from which the disk utilities and software provided with the system may be accessed. The three main programs involved are *The Last Word*, *Masterfile* and *Omnicalc 2*.

THE WORD PROCESSOR . . .

The Last Word (or *TLW* as SAGA like to call it), is SAGA's contribution to the software. I looked at *TLW* in Issue 31, but I'll give a short resume of its contents and performance for those of you who are too lazy to search out the full review . . .

TLW's main attraction is, that if you have a 80 column printer, the screen can display the exact format of your printed text. You have a choice of four character widths from the most legible, 40 columns to a clever (but eye-straining) 80 columns. *TLW* is not as powerful as other word processors on the market – it lacks a sophisticated find/replace option, and has complicated and limited block text handling – but where *TLW* rules supreme is in the area of compatibility with its surrounding peripherals.

TLW's printer handling is second to none, and the **OPUS** disk drive is catered for in every way. Other *TLW* extras include a calculator and the ability to include BASIC variables and data from *Masterfile* directly into a *TLW* text file. An extra program has been added to the original *TLW* for *Compliment* and allows the user to define odd-looking letters and symbols to appear on the screen. This makes it completely compatible with the *Compliment* printer, which can print international characters from eight different countries.

THE DATABASE

SAGA went for the best they could get, and the best is **CAMPBELL SYSTEMS**' *Masterfile*. This database is almost totally menu-driven, and although it takes a while to get used to setting up files, it is relatively quick and powerful, and can use up to 32K for data storage in the 48K machine. After data has been entered, you can play about with the on the screen presentation – using boxes, lines, and different text sizes and colours to enhance the presentation of the file.

The file search is very powerful, and includes facilities to total up and average numeric data. *Masterfile* results can be printed out or saved onto disk via the addition of a new **OPUS** disk option, and may be used in conjunction with *TLW* to give a very powerful letter-writing combination.

THE SPREADSHEET

Good spreadsheets are scarce on the Spectrum, so it is not surprising that *Omnicalc 2* was chosen to fill this slot. It was originally written and released in 1984 by those nice people at **MICROSPHERE**.

Spreadsheets are used to store and collate mathematical data. By applying formulae you can (amongst other things) work out VAT returns or forecast profits and losses for a period of time. When the results have been calculated, they can be plotted on a histogram. Unfortunately, although I could get a print-out of the results table, I couldn't manage to get a hard copy of the histogram. *Omnicalc* is arguably the best spreadsheet on the Spectrum, but I feel that the program is out on a limb in the *Compliment* system, as once you've got your results you can't transfer them to any of the other programs.

Unfortunately, all the software seems to have been grabbed from the respective software houses, made compatible with the disk system and the printer and then left alone. If *Compliment* is supposed to be a fully-independent system, then the manuals should have been re-written and the programs altered to exploit the hardware to the full. As it is, the package seems a little disjointed, leaving Masterfile and Omnicalc looking dangerously dated.

. . . AND THE BRAWN

Now on to the expensive part of your £343.85. **SAGA** are amongst the top producers of Spectrum hardware, and they haven't skimped on the *Compliment* system. The hardware consists of three basic components – the keyboard, the disk drive, and the printer. The keyboard would normally cost you about £50, the disk drive around £100, and the printer a cool £200.

THE KEYBOARD

Need you ask? Of course **SAGA** include one of their own keyboards – not however one of their best! They've decided that the **SAGA** 2+ is good enough for the job – and they're almost right. The unusual layout of the keys is hard to get used to. If you fancy a quick session programming, there are no keyword legends on the keys – you have to look at the keyword layout at the top of keyboard for guidance. The **SAGA** 2+ looks much better than any of the Sinclair efforts, and is a necessity for the keen word-processor user.

THE DISK DRIVE

No surprises here either! **SAGA** have opted for the (almost) industry standard **OPUS** *Discovery 1* disk drive. To my mind, pound for pound, this is the best Spectrum disk drive available. As well as getting a 3.5 inch single-sided, 256K (179K formatted) drive, you also get a parallel printer interface, Kempston joystick port, composite video port, and an on/off switch. The **OPUS** is compatible with Microdrive BASIC commands (although you don't have to use that long-winded method – **OPUS** have their own shortened commands).

The *Discovery 1* is capable of renaming files or copying from one disk to another. It can even copy whole disks at a time (all by using one drive, although you can upgrade to two). It also offers the added bonus of random access files – which make the *Discovery* quicker all round. **ROMANTIC ROBOT**'s *Trans-Express* program is included, and can transfer very simple programs from tape to disk, or any type of program from disk to disk.

THE PRINTER

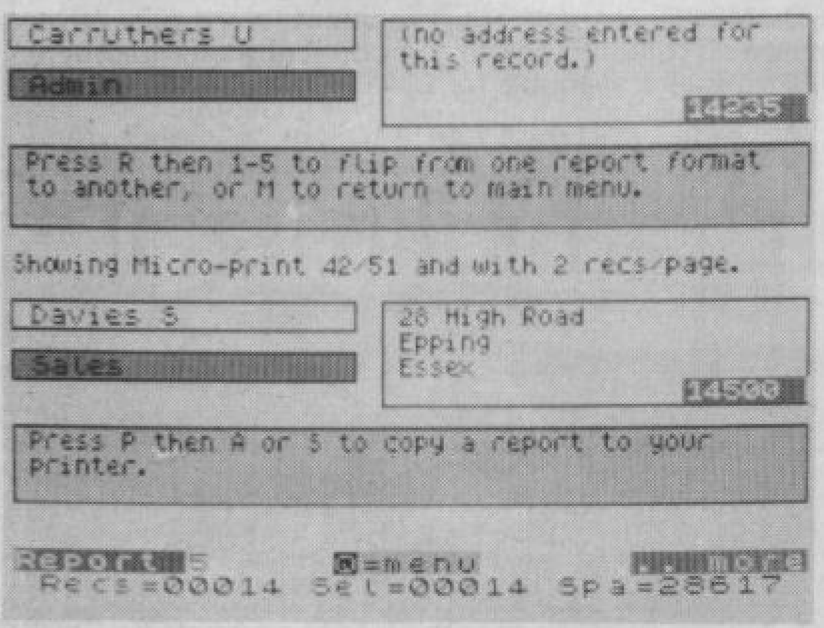
The printer chosen is the *Polo II LQ*. It's a dot-matrix **EPSON**-compatible printer, and as I said earlier it normally sells for £200 (and **SAGA** are the sole distributors). They must be out of their heads selling it at that price – it's worth much more (but I won't tell them if you don't). The *Polo* is claimed to hit a top speed of 150 characters per second in draft mode – I'll take their word for it – although normal speed is 120cps and this gives out very good quality output. But if you want a real surprise, look at the 25cps Letter Quality mode. At this speed you would expect very good quality printing – but to tell you the truth it is very hard to see the difference between output from this and from a daisywheel printer that would cost you about £500!

You also have the full flexibility of a dot-matrix printer, allowing screen dumps and output in lots of different styles. I did find however, that once you were in LQ mode you were a bit restricted as to what style you printed – for instance LQ italics are out of the question. As with all the hardware in the *Compliment* system, the *Polo Mk II* printer is one of the best in its class.

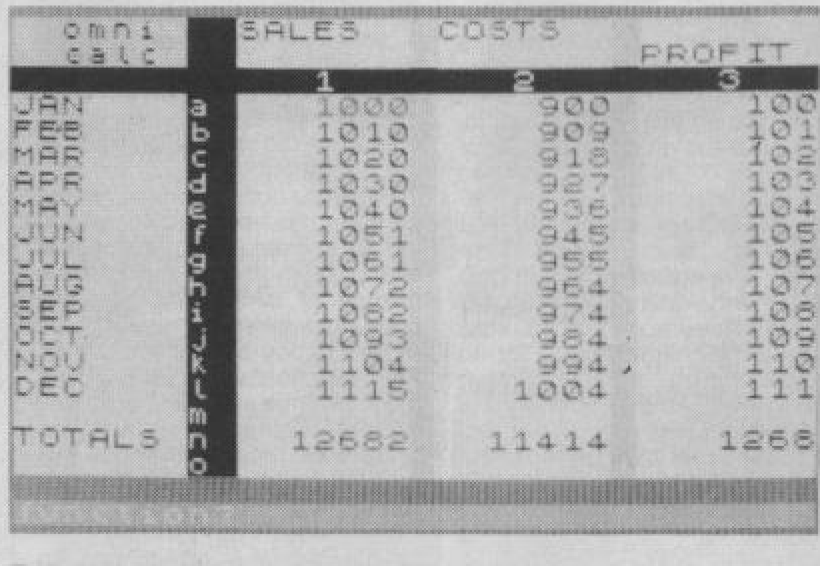
SUMMARY

After having a good look at the *Compliment* system, I am left with the feeling that it is a bit too expensive to lash out on all at once. As *TLW* has just been released it doesn't seem out of place, but *Masterfile* and *Omnicalc* (although good in their time) show how dated they are if put through some rigorous tests. I would much rather have seen **MYRMIDON SOFTWARE** (the designers of *TLW*) design a whole new set of software packages. On the hardware side **SAGA** can't go wrong – they have picked the best of all worlds. **SAGA** also realise that around £350 is quite a lot for a Spectrum owner, and they say that they are willing to supply you with the equipment that suits your needs (and financial means).

Despite the my niggles about the software, **SAGA** have come out with a respectable challenger for Uncle Alan Sugar's PCW: to my mind, they've beaten him on all counts – after all, his software leaves a lot to be desired . . .



Checking up on Carruthers and Davies using the MASTERFILE database software



Estimating profits over a twelve month period is all grist to a spreadsheet's mill



Jon Bates was out doing his Christmas shopping when he popped into his local branch of BOOTS. What should he see, but CHEETAH's latest Keyboard and MIDI add-on? CHEETAH hadn't sent him the goodies, so a quick chat to the BOOTS Manager led to a review . . .

THE MK5 KEYBOARD

For the first time ever, a computer-based firm has stepped out boldly into the territory of the music business. In short CHEETAH, under commission from BOOTS, have launched what is known in the trade as a 'mother' keyboard. On its own it's as deaf and dumb as a stuffed dodo, but linked via MIDI to either a synth, synth module or MIDI hardware, it acts as a polyphonic master controller of all and sundry – especially those synths equipped with fiddly little keys. The instruction manual is very easy to understand with jolly diagrams of the various configurations that can be achieved with the keyboard and various add-ons. I will assume that you have a little knowledge of MIDI by now as I have been bleating about its virtues for some time (see – you should have been paying attention!)

The MK5 is a five octave keyboard with full-size keys and transmits MIDI codes. Obviously it transmits note on/off, but by selecting the centrally-positioned program mode button, the top octave takes on various other functions: channel up/down, octave up/down and program up/down – programs here meaning the sound programs banked in the synths – all 128 of them. A red LED, positioned to the right of the keyboard, flickers ominously whenever a note is played. From this the channel, program, and octave number are read off. Endless sustain (more correctly, a hold function) is achieved by pressing the mode button before releasing the notes.

The pitch-bend wheel is rather oddly positioned – above the keyboard and parallel to it. I'm not sure that this is a good thing: no other keyboard manufactured since 1971 has done this. It's almost as if it were an afterthought. Another problem is that it only bends half the value which the synth is set to.

As with most products, CHEETAH have had to suffer the problem of how much they can include in the MK5 without raising the price too high. Much of the MIDI protocol is not here: keyboard split, modulation wheel, transposition, tuning, provision for sound layering and velocity sensing are all absent. A more serious omission is that it does not work in omni mode – transmitting on all sixteen channels simultaneously. This means that you are rather stuck when it comes to using two or more modules as you can only address them individually or by re-assigning each synth's receiving MIDI channel. Perhaps an intelligent add-on box could provide multiple patch (program) memories and far more detailed MIDI data instructions.

(Many thanks to the management and staff of BOOTS in Stourbridge, who loaned us their one and only MK5 for the purposes of this review. Mass executions have since taken place in CHEETAH's promotions department as a result of their grave oversight.)

MINI INTERFACE

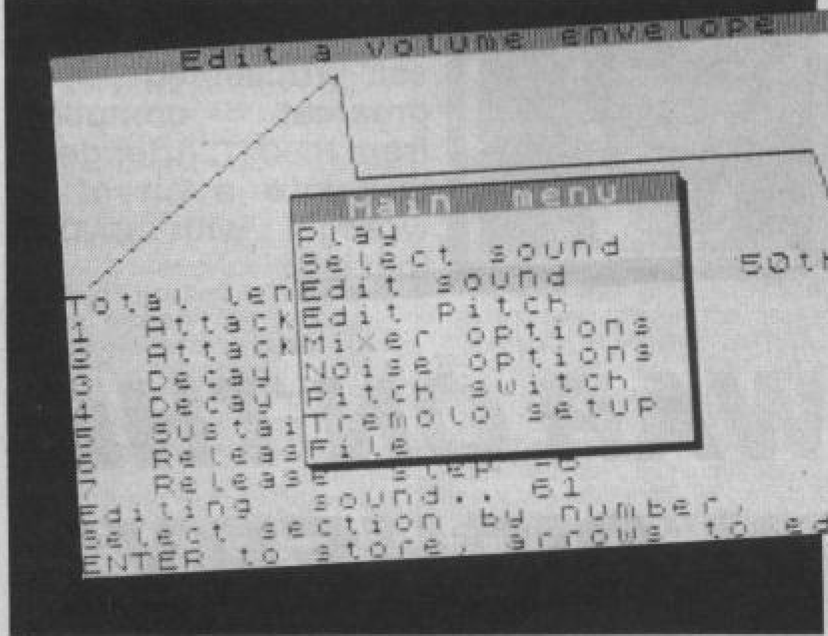
The MIDI interface from CHEETAH has still only appeared in prototype form – there is however a MINI interface. This is an extra for the MK5 keyboard, but it is essential if you have a 128 but no synth. It gives you control over the AY 8912 chip in the 128 which, it must be admitted, was really designed with arcade games in mind; only giving you a basic square wave. Plugging in the hardware and loading up the Microdrive-compatible software gives you full control over the chip: sound shaping, pitch shaping, noise mixing and a split keyboard function. The menu appears as pop-up overlays on the screen you are working on and is very easy to work use.

Full marks for the graphic display of the sound/volume shaping section (more properly called an envelope). It gives a pretty good idea of what the sound will be, although the sustain part of the envelope seems to have a fixed duration. It's also a doddle to work with. Not so the pitch envelope, which is far more complex and requires you to fill out an eight stage table of up to 24 numbers per sound. Why not simplify things and display it visually?

The 'noise' is optional and can be mixed in with the main sound or heard on its own. It isn't wonderfully clear from the manual, but the noise is also shaped by the volume envelope. There is also a modulation option which allows the noise to be affected by the pitch envelope: a different sort of 'swoosh' sounds depending on which part of the keyboard you are playing.

The keyboard split is a goodie. Although the chip is only capable of playing three notes simultaneously, these can be split so that the bottom two octaves of the keyboard can play a different sound to the upper part, a useful and very sensible function. The MK5 keyboard – very efficient. The big complaint here is that none of the sounds can be labelled, they are known by numbers only. I can see this as a real pain when you have created various sound files and need to remember what voice is what from file to file. Also a file merge would be nice so that voices on one file could be added to another.

Given the limitations of the AY 9812 chip, CHEETAH have done a fine job with this module. I'm not sure that it justifies its price tag – particularly as I could not get mine



pitch bend on/off is really a non-starter as: a) you'd hardly fiddle around with the pitch bend control if you didn't want to use it so why bother to switch it off and b) it doesn't track with the key scaling – in other words it only bends a fraction of an octave at the bottom end but achieves a full octave of bend at the top.

There is a tremolo option which does a fair job of chopping the sound up, plus a sound file which can contain up to 64 sounds – you get 20 when you purchase the module. Sounds can be called up from the Spectrum or from the

to work with any other MIDI keyboard other than the MK5 (I suspect some mix-up of MIDI codes and flags). It is however a fascinating and easy tool to use. Watch this space for details of their next load of music modules – it would seem that CHEETAH are becoming very motivated in this direction.

Both these products are available from most branches of BOOTS. The MK5 will set you back £99.95 complete with power supply, and the MINI interface £29.95.

JON BATES

TECH TIPS



This month Simon Goodwin gets to grips with the latest, and self-proclaimed greatest compiler from HISOFT. After getting into a bit of a wrangle with DATEL that is!

WAR ON THE PERIPHERY?

After much telephoning I have found out more about the joystick problem mentioned in last month's review of DATEL's *Snapshot 2*. For some strange reason the *Snapshot* would not work with a CHEETAH Mach I+ joystick. The stick worked fine with other interfaces, and the *Snapshot* worked with older sticks – in fact DATEL said that it would work with any stick (and ANY software – but that's another story . . .)

DATEL and CHEETAH each have their own explanations of what's going on. Since they're in direct competition, you may not be surprised to hear that they blame one another. Judge for yourself:

CHEETAH

CHEETAH blame DATEL for using the wrong kind of 'pull up' resistors in the *Snapshot* interface, which apparently means that it requires an unusually high signalling current. One other brand of interface works the same way – the DATEX *inport*, which DATEL decry as a 'copy' of their design.

Anyhow, CHEETAH's new sticks get into trouble because they have been adapted to work with a normal interface OR the scrambled socket on a Plus 2. The Mach I+ contains an extra resistor to make sure that you can't damage your computer if you accidentally use the wrong plug. This resistor limits the current through the joystick to the point where DATEL's *Snapshot* can't always tell what the stick is up to.

CHEETAH say that their sticks checked out Okay with DATEL's switchable interface but admit that they didn't try the single-port version. DATEL say that there's no difference. By the time you read this CHEETAH will have received versions of their sticks which use a smaller 'protection' resistor and therefore work with even the most bad-tempered of interfaces.

DATEL

DATEL flatly insist that there's nothing wrong with their design, tatty though it may appear. They apparently have no plans to make changes. They did their best to confuse the issue by suggesting that CHEETAH's interface was incompatible with CHEETAH's own joysticks! CHEETAH laugh this off, explaining that Boots and Dixons have been happily bundling that combination for months with every Plus 2 they sell.

As you might expect, DATEL also took exception to my review of *Snapshot 2*, though they made it clear that they disliked the whole TECH TIPS column. "The stuff you write is absolute crap", was their snappy conversation-opener, and most of the rest of their comments reflected a similar depth of analysis. Perhaps they're miffed that we can publish a 50p interface design when they're trying to dump old products with dealers at £2-3 a throw!

DATEL did make a relevant point about **Jamie Neil**'s auto-fire modification, which was one of seven 'Tech Tips' I printed last October. Apparently the modification will not work on 'any' interface as Jamie claims. I'm grateful to DATEL for telling me this, but I'm not sure that it's quite the damning indictment they were looking for.

Like Hannah and Derek, I have to trust readers to be exact when giving tips about hardware I don't use myself. When I hear of snags from manufacturers or the many readers who write in each month, I print the details as soon as I know about them.

This 'honesty all round' policy discourages unreliable tips, as contributors are always named. Mistakes can crop up, but they're easily fixed. In fact no one except DATEL has picked up on the auto-fire problem, and even they didn't mention it until I phoned them to talk about joysticks.

DATEL suggested that the *Snapshot* interface I received was a faulty unit. As I said in the review, I suspected this for a little while, but the facts indicated otherwise. The review unit worked fine on simple, unprotected software, but could not cope with recent, more sophisticated, software titles.

Later in the same call DATEL alleged that ten per cent of Spectrums would not work with ANY 'push-button copier'. Whether this is true or not – and it contradicts the view of other manufacturers – I'm alarmed that DATEL's documentation made no mention of the fact that *Snapshot 2* might not work on thousands of computers!

All of the other interfaces which I have work fine with the test Spectrum. Indeed, the *Snapshot* worked consistently well with some software – but consistently badly with other titles. Nothing in DATEL's long, arrogant diatribe ran counter to my original judgement – that the *Snapshot 2* unit supplied for review was poorly finished, with inadequate software.

SNAP CONCLUSION

So much for invective! For the time being, I would advise you to avoid the combination of DATEL and CHEETAH joystick hardware, or at least to try before you buy. We are willing to try another *Snapshot* unit, and submit it, with the original review interface, for independent technical analysis, if DATEL feel that they deserve a re-test. Finally, as ever, I welcome letters from anyone who can add to this debate. We have already heard from a reader who bought *Snapshot* before our review was published and returned it as of "unmerchantable quality".

THE ULTIMATE ZX BASIC COMPUTER

Most of this month's column deals with a new BASIC compiler from HISOFT, the utility publishers who have been responsible for a number of highly-respected products, including *Devpac*, the first 'professional' Spectrum assembler, and workmanklike compilers for the languages 'C' and 'Pascal'. The new product is called HISOFT *BASIC*, and is billed as 'a fast, floating-point compiler for the ZX Spectrum, 128 and Plus 2'.

We've always taken a special interest in BASIC compilers in TECH TIPS. In August and September 1985 we looked at eight packages that promised to turn slow BASIC into fast, efficient machine code. One of those – *The Colt*, now remaindered at £9.99 – was published by HISOFT, but that has not stopped the firm launching another compiler.

If 'compiler' is a new word to you, don't give up reading yet. A compiler is a programming tool that writes machine code for you. It can be used to write games, (indeed, any program) or just to 'soup-up' existing BASIC software. The 1984 rave from PSS, *Frank'N'Stein*, was written with a BASIC compiler. You don't have to be a programmer to use a compiler, but you do have to be vaguely interested in listings, gameplay or speed. The more interest you take in programming – at any level – the more useful a compiler will be.

FRIENDLY BASIC

Sinclair planned the Spectrum to be a machine for budding programmers, rather than for games players, so the built-in language is very 'friendly'. It lets you alter programs as you test them. It rejects lines that are 'obviously' incorrect, although it can't pick up all errors by looking at a line in isolation. You pay for this convenience, because ZX BASIC can make no assumptions. It checks every part of a program as it runs, in case a POKE has gone astray or you've changed something and re-started the program.

ZX BASIC is termed an 'interpreter' because of the way it works out everything it must do as it goes along. HISOFT *BASIC* is a 'compiler' – a program that runs once, to work out the exact meaning of a program. A compiler generates purpose-made machine code to do the same job – but with fewer checks and no time-wasting.

ICH BIN EIN Z80'r

An analogy may help to make the point. Imagine that you hire a worker who is very fast and efficient, but who can't speak your language. You're the boss – the program – and the clerk is the processor.

Imagine that you've already got details of the clerk's task, written on a set of filing cards. The old clerk used to read through them, in sequence, and do the indicated jobs. If your new employee was to work like an INTERPRETER he would take a dictionary and start looking up the works on the cards, one by one. When he's translated and checked a complete card, he'd do the job – then he'd translate the next card, and so on. The worker can start almost at once, using the old cards you can read, but he is slowed by the need to translate every word every time.

It might be better to use the approach of a COMPILER. In this case you give the clerk a biro and a set of blank cards, and let him translate the instructions once and for all. You end up with a copy of the original instructions, in a different language. You can't understand them, but the clerk can work with them more easily.

A bright clerk – or compiler – can incorporate other improvements into the new set of instructions. For instance, an old card might say 'empty the 200th bucket', requiring the worker to count through the buckets from the start to find the correct one. The new clerk might be able to re-write the instruction, or make a map, so that the correct bucket (or variable, or program line) can be found at once. This saves time, as long as the situation is consistent. If changes are required a new set of specific instructions must be made.

To summarise: interpreters are quick and simple while you're working out what needs to be done, but compiled instructions are more efficient once you know what to do.

NITTY GRITTY

If a BASIC interpreter is very inefficient, and the underlying task is very simple, a compiler can make BASIC hundreds of times faster. In other cases – say, when evaluating trigonometric functions or printing to the screen – the interpreter and compiler work at much the same speed. The time needed to interpret such commands is small compared to the time needed to carry them out.

ZX BASIC is a 'general purpose' language, which makes it concise and easy to learn, but sloppy. All numbers are held in a fiddly floating point form which the computer must work with, piecemeal. An enormous range of numbers can be handled, to nine digits of precision – but that's often a vast overkill.

The processor can handle whole numbers of up to five digits much more easily, but ZX BASIC does not take full advantage of these common 'special cases'. The interpreter struggles on, doing everything slowly, the hard way. Every number is kept in five bytes of memory, even if it would fit into one or two.

String handling is similarly messy. ZX BASIC has no way of knowing how big an undimensioned string will become as a program runs. It chooses to shuffle values around to make room as required. This usually means that it spends more time moving other things out of the way than it does storing or recalling your text. That doesn't matter much when you're testing a new program, but it makes finished software much slower that it need be.

THE AIM

The aim of a BASIC compiler is to give you the speed of machine code – and hence the freedom to use animation, sound effects, and other time-intensive techniques – while still letting you develop your program in friendly, familiar ZX BASIC.

It's easy to learn BASIC, and mistakes are usually obvious and easy to fix. By contrast, machine code programming is complicated, repetitive, pedantic and hard to test. It's just the kind of job you should give to a computer – hence the existence of compilers.

Real programs, and the programmers, are hard to compare, so meaningless but standard programs (called 'benchmarks') are used to test interpreters and compilers in a quantitative way. I've tested HISOFT *BASIC* in this way, to see how it stands up to the competition. But benchmarks are far from the whole story, so I've also given HISOFT *BASIC* some 'real' programs to chew on.

ELECTRIC HACKERS

Before HISOFT *BASIC* arrived there were two main types of ZX BASIC compiler. Some required you to adapt your program, or write it in a special way, so that it could easily be re-expressed in machine code. These compilers – such as SOFTEK's *IS*, HISOFT's *Colt*, and my own *ZIP* – cannot cope with decimal fractions and limit the use of arrays or strings.

These 'subset' compilers can give very good results. They are easier to use than compilers for other languages, because you can test programs beforehand with the interpreter. But they're really just a 'middle ground' between BASIC and machine code. You need quite a lot of knowledge to use subset compilers effectively. They're not a general solution if you've got a slow ZX BASIC program and want to make it faster with the minimum of fuss.

ACCELERATORS

The other sort of compiler is aimed at people who have already got a program, and just want to speed it up without having to study or re-write the code. 'Full' compilers can cope with decimal numbers as well as whole numbers ('integers') but their code is usually 10 to 30 times slower than that of more restrictive compilers. There's a trade-off between compatibility and speed, in that compiled code tends to get slower as it works more and more like the interpreter.

General-purpose compilers are hard to write. The first Spectrum one was SOFTEK's *FP*, which coped well with sums and strings but had quite a few restrictions. It couldn't handle user-defined functions and calculations after GO TOs or DATA. It also banned arrays of more than one dimension.

BLAST was a compiler that sounded wonderful but never worked properly. The publishers, OXFORD COMPUTER SYSTEMS, went bust not long after it was launched. In many ways HISOFT *BASIC* is what *BLAST* should have been – and carries the same £25 price-tag.

But 18 months ago *Mcoder III* arrived, from ERE INFOMATIQUE via PSS. To my mind, *Mcoder III* is the best French program yet released in the UK. It will compile almost anything, although it draws the line at array re-dimensioning and 'add-on' (for example, Microdrive) commands.

Mcoder III is stylish – it runs entirely in video memory, shares variables with normal BASIC, and generates a mixture of compiled and interpreted code with many optimisations. But the documentation is poor, compilation is slow, with two mandatory tape loads, and the implementors have taken a few 'short cuts', trading compatibility for speed.

THE CONTENDER

HISOFT *BASIC* will have to beat *Mcoder III* if it is to 'surpass all others' as HISOFT claim in their manual. It was originally written in Canada on a TMS-2068 – an American Spectrum. HISOFT have improved it and added full support for the 128. Their magic formula is a combination of the speed of the restricted compilers with the flexibility (at comparable speed) of the 'full' versions.

"HISOFT *BASIC* combines the advantages of these two types of compiler without any of the disadvantages", the publishers crow, claiming "simultaneously the fastest integer compiler and the fastest floating-point compiler available for the Spectrums".

DOCUMENTATION

These quotations from the manual sell it short – after a page and a half of hysterical self-congratulation it launches into a readable, well-designed tutorial. The compiler loads in 100 seconds from tape. It can be moved to disk or Microdrive without much hassle. It won't work with some SAGA keyboards, but SAGA have admitted responsibility for the problem and will supply a 'fix' to anyone who runs into trouble.

Nine small demonstration programs follow the code on either side of the tape. The examples are well-chosen to illustrate the way directives – extra REM statements – are used to control compilation.

A simple graphics demonstration is 3.3 times faster after compilation. A compiler can speed up the number-crunching but it can't do much to change the amount of time actually spent plotting points on the screen.

A loop PEEKing and POKEing display information is 15 times faster when first compiled; an extra directive, to say that some variables are integers, makes it 409 times faster than BASIC! This is a 'perfect' example, in the sense that it is something machine code does very well and BASIC very badly. A graphics program working from DATA with DRAW is about four times faster after compilation – this ratio looks more impressive than it sounds.

The Sieve of Eratosthenes is a program to find prime numbers. It's another near-ideal example, although I found it easy to condense and speed-up HISOFT's original BASIC. The compiler ran *The Sieve* about 174 times faster than ZX BASIC. *ZIP* – once the speed champ – accelerates the same code by a factor of 160.

The last two examples are sorting routines, which HISOFT *BASIC* makes 20 times faster. The lines that generate random data for sorting only speed up by about 50 per cent. I compiled several games and utilities from my own collection, and found HISOFT *BASIC* fast-working and reliable. I found one minor bug – STOP and RETURN are treated as the same instruction, so you can't STOP inside a subroutine.

The 50-page A5 manual by programmer **Cameron Hayne** reached HISOFT in handwritten form! The publishers have neatly laser-printed it, but it is easier to read then it is to use – it's more a collection of interesting essays than a reference guide. The tutorial is excellent and the other parts seem quite comprehensive, but examples are rare and the lack of an index is inexcusable.

IN USE

The compiler is started by typing *C. Programs of up to a hundred lines or so are compiled almost instantly. A 3.5K ZX BASIC game compiled into 3.2K of integer code in about eight seconds. As HISOFT *BASIC* compiles your program, gibberish appears on the screen, which is used as a temporary store to free other memory for code.

Messages indicate errors, routine addresses, and the length

of interpreted and compiled code. You must press a key twice to clear messages and step between the phases of compilation. The compiler stops as soon as one error is found. HISOFT *BASIC* works so fast that this is not an irritation. You can fix the offending line at once – just press EDIT.

Compiled code can be started with *R, or a RAND USR command. *X clears out all the code, but it doesn't tell the system, so a subsequent *R will usually crash the computer – beware!

*T is the most innovative feature – this controls a 'trace' which keeps track of variable values as a program is interpreted at about half-speed. When you stop the program you can see a list showing which variables were only used to hold integers, and the maximum length strings reached. If you test a program thoroughly while using *T you can use the list to tell HISOFT *BASIC* which optimisations to perform, and thus get the speed of a 'subset' compiler with no need to study the code yourself.

COMPATIBILITY

HISOFT *BASIC* is more restrictive than *Mcoder III*, but probably a little more compatible. *Mcoder* tries to 'guess' at optimisations, but HISOFT expect you to indicate them by adding directives in REM statements. These indicate signed and unsigned integer variables and maximum string sizes; the default is a rather wasteful 255 characters.

Arrays of one or two dimensions – but not more – are allowed. Dimensions must be fixed, not calculated as a program runs. VAL only works with numbers in quotes, and not with numbers in strings – an annoying limitation. CLEAR and RUN are banned, as are expressions in DATA, disk and Microdrive commands. The music command PLAY works fine on any 128, and is ignored by earlier computers.

Minor quirks include a limit of 450 targeted lines for GO TOs, no coercion in READ (so you must mark integer DATA statements), and no CLS when a program starts. PLOT, DRAW and CIRCLE assume the current colour attributes, for top speed, so you may have to add PAPER 8 or BRIGHT 8 statements in a few places. Division is always done with floating-point arithmetic – even if you're using integer variables – unless you put an INT around the division.

You can generally break into compiled code in the usual way while the compiler is loaded, but not thereafter. INPUT statements are BREAK and crash-proof. The new BREAK scan stops ZX BASIC messages, so you can't tell what line you were on, even when you BREAK normally into the interpreter.

Code is concise, as library routines are not included unless they are required. Floating-point programs tend to grow by about 20-30 per cent as a result of compilation, whereas programs that use integers exclusively usually shrink a little. A convoluted 15K ZX BASIC program was compiled into 20K of machine code in about 80 seconds.

There is 29K free for BASIC and compiled code on a standard Spectrum. You can compile code and DATA separately if there is not room for everything together. HISOFT *BASIC* can also work a bit like *Mcoder III*, overwriting BASIC with compiled code, if you give the word. Spectrum 128 users get the best deal. They can put the compiler entirely on RAM disk, allowing up to 40K of code in memory at once. HISOFT *BASIC* also soups-up the 128's BASIC editor.

SPEED TRIALS

We have printed two sets of Benchmark ratios for HISOFT *BASIC*, showing the speed of floating-point and signed integer code. The table also shows the code tested and the benchmark ratios of the two fastest compilers of 1985 – *ZIP 1.5*, for integer-handling, and *Mcoder III*, tops for flops (FLOating Point OPerationS, dummy!). Each number is the ratio of the ZX BASIC time to the compiled time.

especially as it leaves DATA and functions un-compiled, but it's still a serious competitor for HISOFT *BASIC* if you don't want to bother with REM directives – especially as it's half the price.

If you've got a 128, or lots of programs to compile, or you want to produce commercial software without paying royalties, HISOFT *BASIC* is the best compiler on the market. It is well-designed and HISOFT have a good reputation for supporting and developing their products. But the price is high, although you get a lot for your money. HISOFT *BASIC* is going to do well, but it won't sweep the market.

FREE COMPILERS

Hands shaking from too much zapping? Feel like giving it a rest and compiling something? Instant gratification! You may already have a compiler lurking in your software collection.

The first decent Spectrum BASIC compilers – *WVS* and *Mcoder II* – were effective, although limited. They were rather tatty in design, loading into a fixed 6K hole at the top of the Spectrum's 48K address range. For some strange, undocumented reason all compiled code was tangled up with code in the compiler, so it was impossible to save a compiled program without saving the compiler as well!

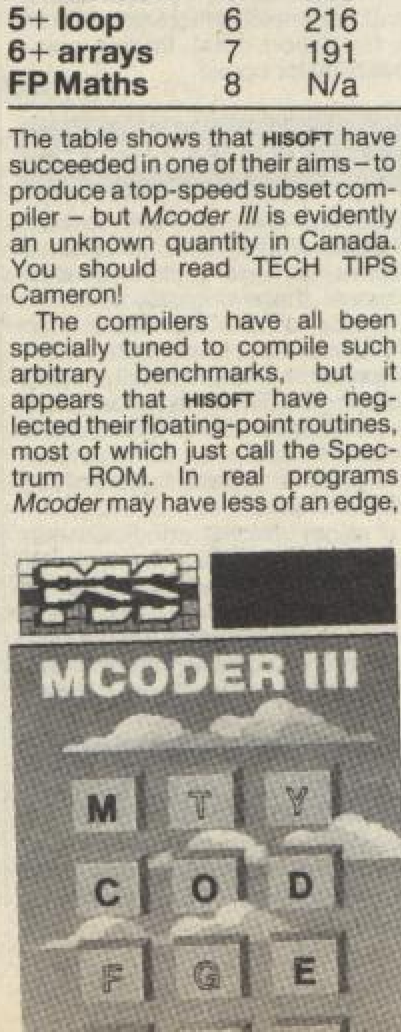
The budget game *Nuke Lear* from CDS contains a compiler, and so does *Frank'N'Stein* from PSS. There's nothing, other than lack of documentation to stop you playing with these 'free' compilers. I've no right to print the original instructions here, so – like me – you'll have to experiment to find out what the compilers can do. This should get you started . . .

ZIP, MCODER III and HISOFT BASIC – BENCHMARK RATIOS

Code	Test	ZIP	HISOFT BASIC (Integer)	HISOFT BASIC (Floating point)	MCODERIII
FOR loop	1	158	162	5.84	42.0
IF loop	2	141	185	6.60	10.7
Var arith	3	113	233	3.00	3.3
Num arith	4	192	238	2.73	3.1
4+ GO SUB	5	219	265	3.32	3.7
5+ loop	6	216	219	4.99	7.7
6+ arrays	7	191	197	6.20	8.8
FP Maths	8	N/a	N/a	1.11	1.13

The table shows that HISOFT have succeeded in one of their aims – to produce a top-speed subset compiler – but *Mcoder III* is evidently an unknown quantity in Canada. You should read TECH TIPS Cameron!

The compilers have all been specially tuned to compile such arbitrary benchmarks, but it appears that HISOFT have neglected their floating-point routines, most of which just call the Spectrum ROM. In real programs *Mcoder* may have less of an edge,

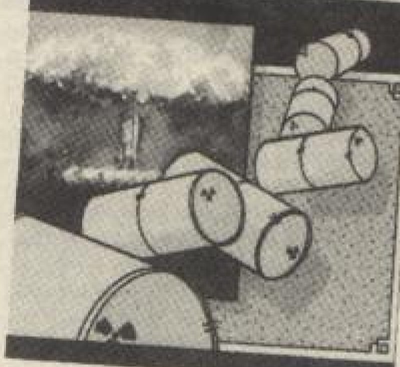


NUKE LEAR

This is a simple, fast, politically unsound game on CCS's *Charlie Charlie Sugar* budget label. To load the compiler type:

```
CLEAR 40000
LOAD "W" CODE
```

NUKE LEAR



Martin Lewis's *WVS 2.2* compiler will load, from part-way through the *Nuke Lear* tape. Type in some simple BASIC and type LET X=USR 59900 to compile it. If all goes well the address of the compiled code will be printed, and you can run it with another USR call. The compiler is integer-only and quite restrictive. If a command is rejected at first, try adding some brackets: this compiler likes LOTS of brackets!

FRANK'N'STEIN

This platform game was one of the classics of 1984, and has appeared on compilations since. Published by PSS, it was written with **David Threlfall**'s compiler, the original *Mcoder*. CRASH reader **Stuart Green** claims (Okay, DATEL?) to have dug out the compiler inside. This is what you type:

```
CLEAR 24750
LOAD "" SCREEN$
LOAD "" CODE
CLEAR 40000
```

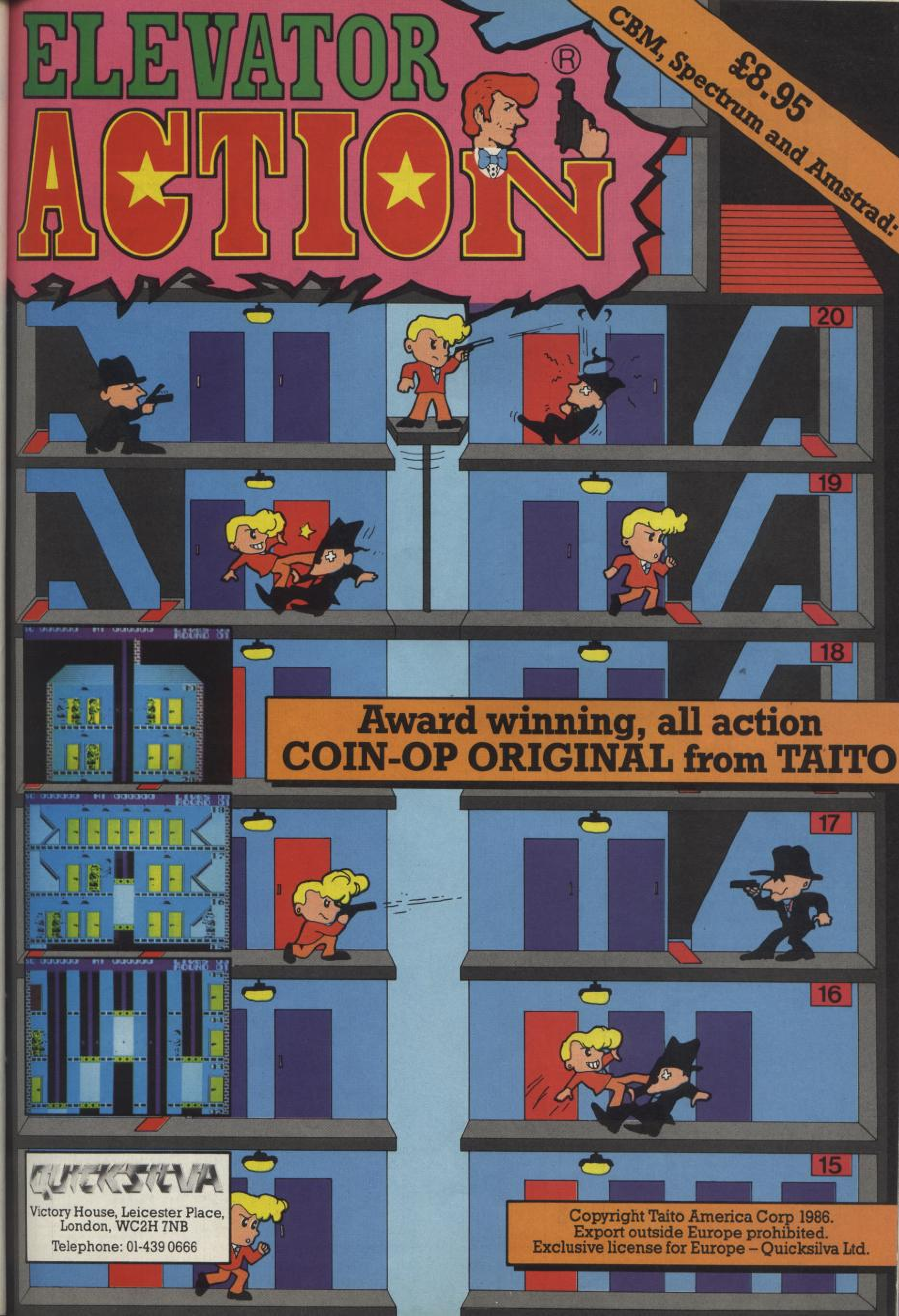
LET T=USR 60000 starts the compiler. You set the address where compiled code is put with a CLEAR statement. Again only whole numbers are allowed, but you can use one-dimensional arrays and most string functions. Redundant brackets may again be useful.

These are old compilers, and not of the same standard as recent releases – but they're still fun to play with if you're interested, but not yet convinced about compilers.

CAPTAIN'S BACKLOG

I've got a massive backlog of post – ideas, suggestions, pleas, threats and demands for software – so I'm going to spend next month's TECH TIPS sifting through that lot, hopefully dispensing a little information and illumination en route. Till then, please keep writing to me at the usual address:

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ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME
PRESENTS
JETMAN
JOHN RICHARDSON
OUR HERO, ABOUT TO BECOME A DINNER FOR THE MONSTER, HAS TRIED TO LOOK INTO HIS FUTURE THROUGH THE FABULOUS EYE OF OKTUP!... HIM HAS DRAWN A BLANK... BUT THE CHEF'S ABOUT TO TRY AN' DRAW BLOOD... BLAAGH!
IT DIN' WORK!
OH, WELL...
I DIDN'T GET TO SEE ANYTHING!
WHAT WRONG!
WHOSSUP!
WHY!
CHOFF
HUP!
MISSED...
BING
IT DON'T WORK!
IT BUSTED!!
IT KNACKERED!!!
YUP...
S'KNACKERED ALRIGHT!
BUT I FIGURED A WAY TO MAKE IT WORK...
YOU HAVE...?
HOW?
TIME TO TOP THE LOONY..
I'LL USE THE BLUNT SIDE!
CHIFF
AND OUR HERO, BEING PREOCCUPIED WITH WAYS TO STOP GOING TO THE LOO, DROPS THE FABBO EYE OF OKTUP...
DINK
CLINK
PLINK
MEANWHILE, THE MONSTER IS HAVING A PRE-DINNER NAP DOWNSTAIRS...
YAWN
?
SHNAP
HO MI GAWD! I SWALLERED SOMMAT!! WHAT I SWALLERED?? HOPE IT WASN'T A SPIDER! BET THAT LOONY DONE IT! BET I GOIN' DIE...
BWAH!
GULP
OH,...UM,...
...CANCEL DINNER...
URP!
RINGA-DINGA-DINGA-DING
WE'RE GOIN' TO THE PLACE WHERE US MONSTERS GO TO DIE...
WE'RE GOING...
TO THE MONSTERS GRAVEYARD!!
THUD
THUD
THUD
MEANWO... OUR HERO RECIEVES THIS NEWS WITH LESS THAN JOY...
BLARG!
SNORK!
HE WAS REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO DINNER...
GROWL
NYAH
YAP
BLAH!
NOW HE'S A RAVING LOONY!!

A brand new year starts and it looks like the Ludlow Mafia are happy to leave the Gibbet rent fixed at 1986 prices – which means that dealing with Hall of Slime cheats shouldn't put too much of a strain on the tea kitty.

Time marches on, games come and go, but the Hall of Slime stays. There's no shortage of willing high-score heroes it seems, so here's to another year of classic high-score gore . . .



Hobbit completed 52%
Finders Keepers completed, 88%
Sky Ranger all but one watcher killed on Level Four
Jetpac approx 65,000 – round all four ships once
Atic Atac 49%
Alien 8 six chambers
Scrabble beaten on Level Four
Chequered Flag Cambridge Ring 48.0 secs approx; Micro Drive, 54.82 secs; Paul Ricard 1.26.72 secs; Brands Hatch, 1.29.50 secs approx; Silverstone 1.16.75 secs
Hypersports Swimming 26.1 secs; Shooting 8,900; Vaulting 8.64; Archery 4,000; Triple Jump 16.05m; Lifting – Bantam Weight; Overall 80,000
Airwolf 11th screen
Match Day highest score on Amateur Level, 12-0
Bomb Jack over 100,000
Football Manager Level One, Division One, F A Cup Winner 3 times
Journey's End third part, versus dragon
Frank Bruno reached fourth boxer
Hunchback screen eight
Nicholas Peers, Powys

Tapper Space Bar
Paperboy Sunday
V completed
Planet of Death completed
Espionage Island completed
Ghosts 'n' Goblins rescued princess
Quazatron completed all eight cities
Dan Dare completed
Hampstead achieved Hampstead
Exploding Fist 10th Dan
Gladiator received certificate of freedom
Way of the Tiger completed
Ghostbusters $185,000
Kai Temple rung bell twice
Kane completed
Redhawk completed
Stuart Walker, Widnes, Cheshire.

Horace and the Spiders completed
Sabre Wulf completed
Atic Atac completed
Lightforce 766,250, round seven times
Bomb Jack 230,000
Manic Miner reached 14th screen
Hypersports 80,000
Cobra second level
Commando area seven
Elite Dangerous; 110,000 credits
Saboteur completed
Stainless Steel completed
Dandy almost completed
Alex Campbell, London

Paperboy completed
Dynamite Dan II fifth island
Green Beret completed
Match Day beat computer 15-0
Olli and Lissa fourth task
Commando area eight
Way of the Exploding Fist 10th Dan
Jack the Nipper completed
Saboteur completed
Bomb Jack 225,720
Mikie got to girl twice in a row
Dynamite Dan completed
Cauldron II five items

Match Point beat computer
Frank Bruno's Boxing beat all boxers
Spy Hunter 245,100
Bruce Lee completed five times
Nodes of Yesod 75%
Rambo completed
World Series Baseball won 33-0
Stephen Brandish, Stratford Upon Avon

Sam Fox Strip Poker all pictures
Paperboy completed 82,650
World Cup Carnival won World Cup (too easy!)
Bobby Bearing three bearings home
Bomb Jack 420,820 (no POKE)
Knight Tyme completed
Quazatron cleared three cities
Dynamite Dan II third Island
Dale Cunliffe, Mansfield

Spy Hunter 175,000 approx
Batman completed
Football Manager won First Division and Cup four times in a row
Jack the Nipper completed
Bruce Lee beaten computer 7-0 in final
Rambo completed
Bomb Jack 546,650
Saboteur completed
Zaxxon 36,350
Dynamite Dan completed
Steven Kidd, Ivybridge, Devon

Lightforce 75,390
Pentagram completed
Jason's Gem completed
Mindstone completed
Rogue Trooper completed
Bomb Jack 1,571,000
Nic Flinn, Lytham, Lancashire

Mikie completed twice
Saboteur completed
Kung Fu Master completed
Green Beret 500,000 completed
Yie Ar Kung Fu 127,000
Transformers 2,259
Jet Set Willy 60 items
Frank Bruno beat Frenchie
Automania completed sixth car
Spy Hunter 1,136,925
Rambo 19,000
Commando 56,230
Bobby Bearing rescued two brothers
Manic Miner 24th cavern
Lisa Caro, Shepherds Way

Exploding Fist 10th Dan (82,900)
Tapper Space Bar
Movie 73%
Kung Fu black belt
Bruce Lee completed 32 times
Yie Ar Kung Fu stage 17
Rocky Horror Show completed
Way of the Tiger completed
Mikie completed
Rupesh Chhetry, Harlesden London

Starstrike II completed
Rambo completed
Bobby Bearing Barnaby and Bert
Ghostbusters $850,000
Paperboy Saturday
Heavy on the Magick Practicus
Ghosts 'n' Goblins completed
Planet of Death completed
Espionage Island completed
Kung Fu Master Level Three
Sam Fox Strip Poker all six pictures
Stuart Walker, Widnes, Cheshire

Harrier Attack completed (Fraz)
Atic Atac 17,042; 50% (Gaffer)
Full Throttle 11th place (F&G)
Olli and Lissa got mushroom
Paperboy 6,606 and bonus (Gaffer)
Spy Hunter 71,000 (Fraz)
Atic Atac 20,063; 57% (Fraz)
Keith (Gaffer) and Fraser (Fraz), Carnoustie Scotland

Exploding Fist 10th Dan
Bounder completed and gone round again
Starstrike II two systems
3D Starstrike Level Ten
Ghosts 'n' Goblins completed
Highway Encounter completed
Jack the Nipper completed
Bobby Bearing rescued two brothers
Batman completed
Spy Hunter Level Three
Robin of the Wood completed
Tony Denny, Felixstowe

World Cup won cup
Saboteur completed
Commando one million
Rambo completed
Mikie round twice
Frank Bruno completed
Bruce Lee 601,400 (fingers got cramp)
Ping Pong 999,999
Knight Tyme 100% completed
Three Weeks in Paradise completed
Chuckie Egg Level 23
World Series Basketball Level Six; 440
Dynamite Dan four sticks of dynamite
Abu Simbel completed
Westbank Level 11
Jonathon Griffiths, Newtownards, Co Down

FRNTLINE

with Philippa Irvine



THE NEW BROOM

Having temporarily forsaken the spires of Oxford for the winding alleyways of Ludlow, it's time for me to introduce myself as the new frontline columnist. Although adventure games are now well-understood as a genre and catered for in most magazines in a specialised way, strategy software doesn't usually meet with the same depth of treatment.

In a recent edition of another Spectrum magazine, a wargame review opened with an apology for the fact that it was one, and an assurance that despite everything it was quite a good game. It's difficult to imagine an adventure being treated like this, and yet what might be called pure strategy games are just as different from the 'arcade sector'.

I believe that all kinds of games, 'minority' or not, should have specialised treatment, and so I'm happy to have the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Sean Masterton. As everyone knows, the life of an Oxford student is hectically divided between punting on the Isis, going to college balls, being thrown into Christ Church fountain and smashing up restaurants. Despite these demands on my time I'm sure I'll manage to fit in editing FRONTLINE.

Next month I'll be talking about the relationship between strategy and adventure software and the non-computer gaming hobby, so let's have your views on that.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

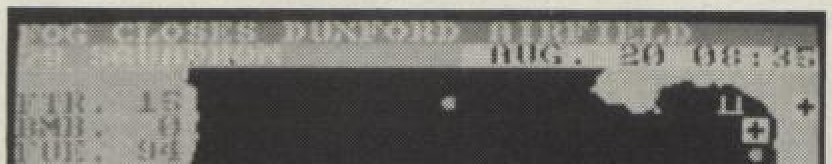
Producer: PSS
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Author: **The PSS team**

Pss seems to be trying to appeal to the mainstream market with its "all action" Wargamers Series, this game continues in this vein. This kind of wargame is exclusive to the computer. It relies on the facilities offered by a computer, and owes far less to board and miniature gaming than more traditional implementations. This is not instrinsically bad – just different – and of its type *Battle of Britain* is certainly not bad. But like **PSS**'s other releases, it is as much a game of reflex and quick thinking as strategy, and there is not much time for reflection and planning. Potential purchasers should be aware of this.

Apparently we all know about the Battle of Britain, because the rulebook contains no historical background whatsoever. This is a major deficiency; the Battle of Britain may be one of the more familiar episodes in military history, but as a matter of principle, all wargames with any pretensions to authenticity ought to back themselves up with information which puts the action in context.

There are three basic gametype options offered, the introductory level training game, the fast, furious and very short blitzkrieg game, and the full-scale 30 day campaign scenario.

The training level is useful for the first few attempts, but it is ludicrously easy and becomes redundant after any proficiency is attained.



The map shows major towns, airfields and radar stations in the south of England. The command box is over a British squadron. In the box top left is given the squadron's status and the four arrows show where the squadron is off to – straight into the path of the German raiders.

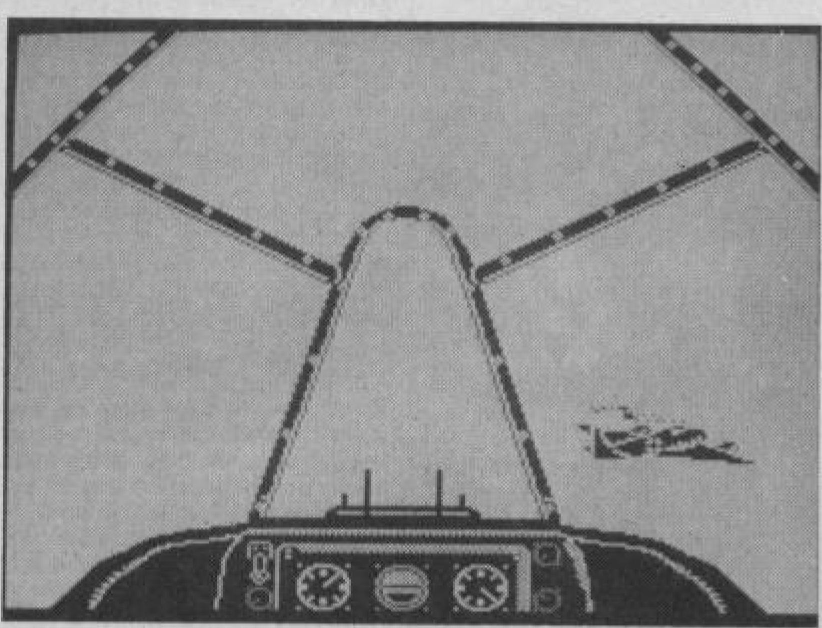
The Blitzkrieg only lasts for one day, in this scenario the Luftwaffe go for an all-out attack on every target, and do it so quickly that keeping up with the action becomes close to impossible without an extra set of faculties.

The campaign game is impressive by comparison, both in terms of content and length. It takes place over thirty days, implements a predictable strategy which is historically accurate, and has a choice of three speeds. In between days the player has the opportunity to make up the numbers of the squadrons from a pool of reserves. This gradually diminishes in quality as the days go by, representing the recruitment of inexperienced pilots. Playing the campaign game all the way through is a long-term project. At the slowest speed, with the arcade option, it could take well over five hours. Fortunately there is an option which allows the position to be saved at the end of a day.

The fact that speed determines the level of play in the campaign says something important about the game. The most important skill which determines success or failure is the ability to dash the command box about the screen, scrambling squadrons efficiently and moving them to intercept the Luftwaffe. No specific orders can be given to the squadrons, and unless the arcade sequence is being played, the outcome of an aeriel conflict seems to depend on relative numbers.

Play takes place across a simplistic (but functional) map of the south of England. British radar stations, airfields and cities are

represented, and can be identified by moving the joystick or movement-key operated command box. The date and time is permanently displayed underneath a scrolling message screen. This screen throws out a rapid variety of information about the weather conditions at airfields, squadrons which are short of fuel or lost, and cities and radar stations which are bombed by the Germans. Each type of message is accompanied by a distinctive audio signal, which isn't a bad idea as in the faster games there is scarcely enough time to keep up with them. Information about the strength and condition of each squadron when airbourne can also be obtained via the command box. There are eighteen squadrons available, stationed around the nine airfields, and all are either Spitfires or Hurricanes. The Luftwaffe squadrons are made up both of fighters and bombers.



The arcade screen, at the cockpit of a Spitfire.



Many purists are dubious about the arcade element which PSS incorporate into their wargames. It is optional in *Battle of Britain*; if selected, the player is given the chance to participate in any battle by selecting the squadron in combat and playing a brief snatch of unexciting simulation. This is cosmetically attractive, but very basic and slightly too easy, it is disassociated in feel from the rest of the game. Success in shooting down the German planes increases the number of Luftwaffe casualties, but playing through the sequence greatly lengthens the time it takes to get through any of the scenarios, and missing it out doesn't appear to put the player at a disadvantage. It seems that an entire Luftwaffe squadron was faced by a single Spitfire or Hurricane, that the German pilots did not shoot back, and that they waited to be attacked one plane at a time.

The gameplay is fast and smooth and it becomes absorbing after a while; it's the kind of addiction though, that comes from the satisfaction of quick thought and action rather than depth of thought, and it may not be what some people are looking for in a strategy game. On its own terms it has an atmosphere of authenticity, and creates a playable fast-moving enviroment which many will find enjoyable.

PRESENTATION 89%
Substantially packaged and good on the screen

RULES 79%
The rules which relate to the operation of the game are clear and concise, but there is a woeful lack of background material

PLAYABILITY 86%
The gameplay is smooth and fast and has a degree of hookability

AUTHENTICITY 87%
Deviations from historical accuracy are acknowledged; the pattern of Luftwaffe attack is authentic and there is a frantic feel to the gameplay which recreates the atmosphere of the original battles

OPPONENT 77%
Follows historical strategy, but chooses targets randomly. Not much subtlety

VALUE FOR MONEY 83%
. . . depending on what you're looking for in a wargame

GRAPHICS 78%
The graphics are not stunning but they are clear enough and do the job

OVERALL 82%
Recommended as a fast-moving puzzle

LEGIONS OF DEATH

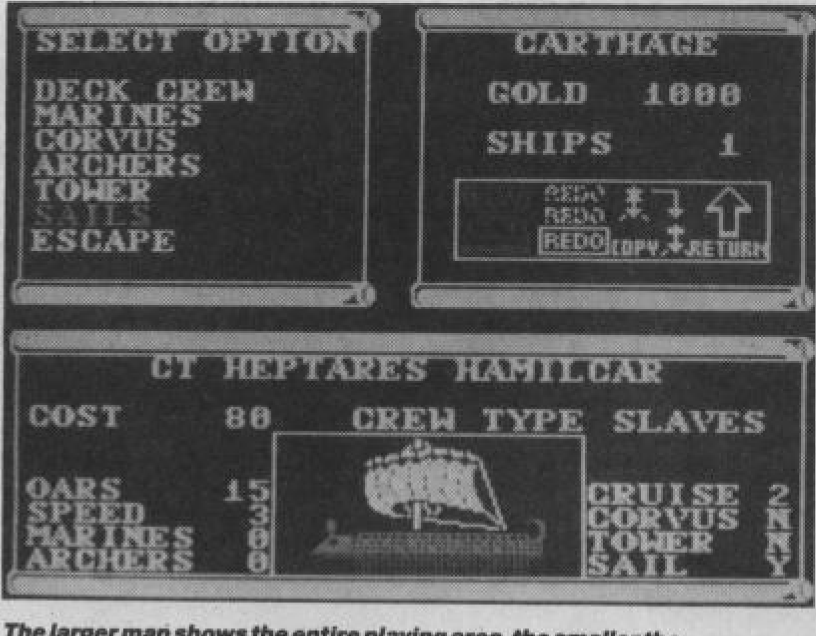
Producer: Lothlorien
Retail Price: **£9.95** Author:

A curiously uninformative title, behind which lies a game concentrating on simulating the role which naval warfare played in the Punic Wars. The Punic Wars were quite as important as the Napoleonic Wars, and were largely about who was going get the chance of making an empire of the world, the Romans or the Carthaginians. It is to this conflict that the famous episode of Hannibal and his elephants belongs, but the wars in their entirety lasted from 264BC to 146BC. The turning-point came in 203BC when Rome won a decisive land victory at the Battle of Zama, after which Carthage was a doomed city and its eventual destruction was inevitable.

The main reason for the Cathaginian defeat was the Roman success in neutralising her powerful naval position. In 264BC the Roman people voted to aid the Mamertines of Messana against the Carthaginians, and met Carthage for the first time on the Island of Sicily.

The objective of the game is to move ships into neutral and enemy ports, and ship gold from them to the capital city. You must also engage the enemy when they happen to be encountered in the pursuit of these goals.

The player must first design his fleet, in a manner which is inevitably slightly artificial but nevertheless contains an impressive variety of choice and detail. He starts with a treasury of 1000 gold pieces with which to buy the navy. There are five basic models of ship offered, in ascending order of price from the small two-oar bireme to the slow and massive Ct Heptares. Once the type of ship has been selected the player can decide what kind of crew to assign to it, including whether to have specialised marines and archers aboard. He must also decide on 'optional extras', like towers and sails, to add to the basic design. A good crew and extras increase the fighting efficiency of the ship but they all cost money. The most expensive ship it is possible to design costs 214 gold pieces, and only four can be bought with the initial funds. By contrast the cheapest ship, a bireme with a crew of slaves, no marines, archers, or extras, only costs 15 gold pieces. In between, there is a vast permutation of possible prices and the maximum fleet of sixteen can be built up of any combination of ship designs. There is a copy facility to duplicate a ship you've designed if you want more than one to that specification.



The larger map shows the entire playing area, the smaller the details of movement and combat.

Once the fleet has been built to the player's satisfaction, the program moves onto the main map screen. There are two maps, one a static large-scale representation of the Mediterranean area between Italy and Carthage and the other a scrolling small-scale map showing detail. Most of the action takes place in the small map, as orders are given via it, and the ports and ships can only be seen on it.

Orders are given to the fleet by a series of icons. After the idiot-proof clarity of the purchasing procedure, this is where the operation of the game can get slightly confusing. With a little perseverance and patience you can get the hang of the system, and it does not remain hopelessly cumbersome to work.

Each ship must be given its

orders individually after being selected by means of a cursor on the small-scale map. Movement is subject to how fast the rowers have been instructed to go and which course is set for them. If fully rigged, the ship will go with the wind direction without intervention from the rowing crew. The system is clumsy but no doubt reflects real-life difficulties of navigation and co-ordination. Gold can be loaded and unloaded from ships when in port, and damaged ships can also be repaired at a cost.

Combat with the enemy can only happen when ships collide, and the result of these encounters has already been influenced by the type of ship and crew selected. The players role in these encounters is limited to the option to grapple or degrapple. Combat can go on at the player's choice for as many rounds thereafter as it takes to sink one of the ships.

One interesting feature is the user-definable victory conditions, which add variety but detract greatly from the feeling of historical authenticity. Victory is defined in terms of gold accumulated, enemy ships sunk, and ports captured.

It is very easy to set an extremely low set of victory conditions and win after the first turn, but the maximum victory conditions of 2000 gold pieces, sixteen ships and fifteen ports take a long game to achieve.

There is a two-player option, but in one-player mode the player is always Carthage. This may well be to disguise the fact that both sides start with exactly the same naval resources, something else which detracts from an authentic feel.

The game lacks variety, there is nothing to do beyond ferrying gold to the capital and bashing into enemy ships that get in the way. As an end in itself this presents a satisfying task, but it is slightly divorced from a real historical context despite the Greek trimmings of the construction stage. The overall impression is nevertheless refreshing, and anyone with an intrinsic interest in the era, or in naval warfare, will find a lot to enjoy in the game.

PRESENTATION 91%
The on-screen impression is excellent

RULES 80%
The rules are not extensive, but they are concise and cover everything. The flow-chart is a nice try

PLAYABILITY 82%
Slightly sticky sometimes, but after practice it's easy to get into a rhythm

GRAPHICS 86%
Functional and very attractive

AUTHENTICITY 79%
There is a cosmetic authenticity, but the gameplay doesn't really recreate anything

OPPONENT 81%
Pity you can't choose sides in the one-player version

VALUE FOR MONEY 84%
This should keep you going for a while

OVERALL 84%
An interesting and good-looking game

FRONTLINE



FORUM

My first FORUM and the letters haven't exactly poured in. This is a valuble part of FRONTLINE which ought to be expanded. I can't do this on my own! If, like me, you enjoy reading real letters, get writing and send me your views on strategy games and, of course, hints and tips. Surely, above all others, strategy games lend themselves to discussion of tactics. Please! You wouldn't want me to start making letters up, would you?

Dear Philippa,
While wading through the 50p bargain bucket in the computer department of the local Boots, I found many software 'classics'...
–The audio tape of instructions for *American Football*
–The recording of *Relax*, given away with *Frankie Goes to Hollywood*
–Conversion tapes for Kempston compatibility for all the latest hits... of 1983
–*Chaos*...

Yes, they were actually selling (one copy of) *Chaos* for just 50p. Great I thought, according to your column last month this has got to be a bargain. 'what's the problem' I hear you asking. Well, there was a reason for the cheap price. Yes, you guessed it – no instructions. I would be very grateful therefore if you, or one of your readers, could possibly give me some instructions on the game – what keys to use, how the game works, anything...!

I would be very grateful for any assistance you could profer, as I would very much like to gain the full benefit of this, apparently excellent, game.

Keep up the good work.
Paul Fulcher, Cambridge.

I'm sorry, Paul, but I can't help you with this. GAMES WORKSHOP, *who (according to my diligent research) published the game, don't seem to remember anything about it. But I'm sure every reader of this column knows more about it than me, so please help Paul! Of all the different types of game, I should imagine that a strategy game without instructions is the most useless.*

PI

Dear Philippa,
As a result of the FRONTLINE column in CRASH (the only magazine which has a wargames section) I became interested in war games one year ago, and purchased the excellent *Arnhem*.

Since then I have watched this aspect of the industry expand (seven wargames were advertised in the December issue) and vastly improve in most respects.

However there is a distinct lack of fantasy wargames. I only know three; *Lords of Midnight, Doomdark's Revenge* and *Swords of Bane*. So software producers, start producing more. Any fantasy wargames would make up for the disappointment of *Lord of the Rings* being an adventure. Tolkein has written the perfect formula for fantasy wargames. I long for the day when I see Orcs, dwarves, wizards and riders charging over my TV screen – *Arnhem* style.

I also feel that there should be more modern nuclear wargames. I almost bought *Theatre Europe* until I discovered that it wasted memory on an arcade section, something I feel should be excluded from all wargames.

Also I think that more wargames should allow joystick controlled movement.

Finally we've had *HURG, The Quill* and *GAC* so what about a program to design your own wargames. Also all new games should allow the players to re-design the playing area.

I am quite happy with the present situation however, and these are only minor points. Anyway good luck with the new job and I hope you can expand the column.
Ally Hume, Fife

PS: Can you name me any good two or more player wargames, as well as where I could buy a rule book to play fantasy tabletop wargames with miniatures.

I couldn't agree with you more about the need for more fantasy wargames. Historical and modern wargames aren't to everyone's taste; some people have moral objections to recreating wars in which real people died or anticipating holocausts in which we could all be killed, and some are simply uninterested in military history. If there were more fantasy wargames the appeal of the whole genre would be wider. Mike Singleton's *games were mainstream bestsellers and prove the point. Besides, there's so much scope for different gameplay elements like battle magic and race animosity. There's no reason why Tolkien's books shouldn't be translated to computer as wargames as well as adventures.*

A wargame designer sounds like a good idea in theory, but if it were effective and popular like the Quill *it would inevitably have an eneverating(LMLWD) effect on the strategy software scene. Unfortunately, I think this is what has happened to adventures.*

Desert Rats *is still the best two-player wargame around, particularly if you have a 128. It's easy for a wargame to offer a two-player option and most of the decent ones do, though in my opinion if you've got an opponent you're better off with a board game!* GAMES WORKSHOP'S Warhammer *fantasy tabletop rules have been revised and reprinted this year, and are the only widely availible rules of this kind. You'll get a set in any specialist games shop.*

Ally wins this month's twenty pounds worth of software.

PI



STOP A FEUD AND WIN A DAYTRIP TO THE LONDON DUNGEON!



In days of old when men were knighted for being REAL men (and Comps Minions had yet to be terrified by large Doc Martened editors), the world was a much different place. For instance, people did not live in large cities, but in tiny villages.

One of these villages is the setting for *Feud*, a new game from MASTERTRONIC. The folk in this village scraped a meagre living from the land, supplemented by fishing the local river which was stocked with rather large fish – the like of which haven't been seen since.

All in all, the village people had a pretty good time of it, but as they say – all good things must come to an end. The prosperity of the village dwindled when the local wizard became seriously ill. From his sick-bed he wrote to his two sons Learic and Leanoric, asking them to return home so that he could choose his successor. The two boys had just finished their final exams at the Glastonbury School of Wizardry, and returned home expectantly.

Alas, the frail old man passed away before he could establish which of them was to take over in his role as village magician. It was left to the two brothers to decide which one of them was to be on the steady earner for the rest of his life, and which wasn't. They tried to settle things in a civilised manner, but eventually relations between them broke down and a blood feud developed.

The rivals moved to opposite ends of the village and began to concoct spells with which they attempted to obliterate each other. At noon each day they met to try out that morning's horrid invention. At first the spells were relatively harmless (to the village and its inhabitants at least). Most people enjoyed watching one of the wizards being turned into a slug, or a glass of water, or some such harmless object. When Learic turned himself into a giant fire breathing sea-monster however, things started to get completely out of hand. While trying to eat Leanoric he accidentally polluted the river with an excess of paraffin. This killed all the rather large fish, and the villagers threw a complete wobbly.

This is where you come in. Put yourself in the place of one of the exasperated village folk and work out how to stop the two brothers wrecking the town. This must be achieved without loss of life or limb to yourself, so duffing them up is out of the question . . .

Whether you come up with a wizard-clobbering machine, an evil conjuror-crunching spell, or even hire the Magic Mafia, your ideas must be well presented and reasonably concise. Jot down instructions for ridding the village of the battling magicians and illustrate them if you like.

The efforts of the entrant with the best idea will be rewarded with a day trip to the London Dungeon (sounds like home!) and a copy of *Feud*. The next five most inventive wizard-bashers receive a MASTERTRONIC *Magnum* joystick and a copy of *Feud*, while the best 25 of the rest collect a copy of the game.

So, get your thinking caps on and send off your entries to, WANGLE A WIZARD, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB to arrive before the 28th of February 1987.

FIVE JOYSTICKS AND 25 COPIES OF FEUD ON OFFER!

Crash Competition



IT'S SHOWTIME!

Hordes of PBMers are set to appear at the doors of the Porchester Hall on 7th February, eagerly awaiting the start of the Second British PBM Convention, which begins at 10.30am. This month, instead of the usual game overview, I present you with a preview of what I am told will be at the convention . . .

MAJOR

Most of the major PBM companies in Britain plan to be there, showing (and selling) their wares. **John Nicholson**, Managing Director of VORCON GAMES, intends to demonstrate his wonderful *Vorcon Wars* game as well as launching *Super Vorcon* again for the benefit of those who missed the previous launch. John is held in some reverence by the hobby as a whole – probably owing to the fact that trying to get hold of him for a chat is like trying to track down Melissa Ravenflame, 'cos it just cannot be done. (NOTE: GMs tend to believe the word chat, when related to PBM, also means cheat – what other ways are there to subtly glean gaming information?) I have a lot to say to John. . . .

MITREGAMES, long established GMs of such epic (but expensive) games as *Global Supremacy*, *Midgard* and *Tribes of Crane* should be launching their new strategy game *Starship Commander*. I am reliably informed that this is a science fiction game. I would never have guessed! Meanwhile, SPELLBINDER GAMES (*Keys of Bled*, *Spiral Arm* and *Warlord of Kaos*) launching a new tactical game called *Kingdom* – something to do with royalty, greed and economics but not necessarily in that order.

The final major PBM game release scheduled for the convention is from SLOTH ENTERPRISES (who will also be plugging *The Enchiridon*, *Kings of Steel* and *The St Valentine's Day Massacre*). Their new game is called *American Football*, which is a revamped version of the well established amateur game *Game Plan*. SLOTH state that there will be two versions of the revamped version, ingeniously named 'simple' and 'complex'. **Mike McGarry** mentioned that he found the simple game too complex – I cannot even understand the real game!

AND MINOR

The lesser-known companies expected to have stands include WHITEGOLD, NO-DICE GAMES (presenting a game called *Cassus Belli* or *Domination*, depending upon whether you believe the rulebook or *C&VG*), *Aes* and their new range of games. A host of others companies should be represented, including M&A GAMES. In general, anybody who is anybody in the PBM world will be present (excluding KJC GAMES and ICBM) to chat with punters and plug their games with special startup offers and competitions.

JOURNALISTS!

The media will be represented by *Flagship* and *PBM Magazine*, as well as *Computer Gamer*'s **Mike McGarry**, *C&VG's* **Wayne**. And of course, me!

DEMONSTRATIONS

There are some interesting demos lined up for your entertainment: LABYRINTH intend to take the stage with some live RPG – great fun, even if you aren't a fan of Dungeons and Dragons. There will be a demonstration wargame going on for most of the day, as well as the usual computer game competitions (be there early to get into these) and the PBM Award ceremony. Incidentally, also attending will be a caricature artist who will take the michael out of you on paper if you pay him (probably the artist who drew me . . .) – plus a guest appearance from **Dave Langford**, no relation to Bonnie, the *White Dwarf* SF writer.

BE THERE

Admission on the day will cost £1.50 – the Porchester Hall is in London WE2, near Paddington Station. Take some money with you to take advantage of the cheap startup offers. I shall be in the bar, as far away from the Heavy Metal stand as possible. Have fun!!!

PS Incidentally, those of you of pub-going age may be interested in attending the SF meet on Friday 6th February in The Crown, Brewer Street, London W1 . . .

TWO QUESTIONS . . .

Dear Brendon
Would you please answer two questions for me: how do I find out more about the PBM games available, and why do they cost so much to play?
Matthew Butler, Thundersley, Essex

Write to either Flagship *or* PBM Magazine, *details of each can be found in earlier MAILBOXES. PBM games are quite expensive to play because of the amount of effort and resources put into them by the GMs: Many GMs put a lot of time into your turn responses – and prices, in general, reflect this. As well as administration costs, you must bear in mind that the PBM companies must also pay postage and paper costs!*

BK

LATE CRASIMOFF'S WORLD?

Dear Brendon
It seems to be that KJC GAMES are about to drop their popular game *Crasimoff's World*: player numbers have admittedly fallen to just 600 from well over 1000, but is this fair? A petition is being organised by the remaining players to alert the non-fussed GMs that *CW* will be missed.

If KJC do go ahead with their plans, I hope that their other games do not suffer the same fate.
G Manganoni, Farncombe, Surrey

Although I have heard nothing from KJC *about the matter, several readers have mentioned concern over CW's future. It does, at first glance, seem unfair on established players for* KJC *to drop the game. Any comments?*

BK

UNDER AGE?!

Dear Brendon
A friend and I both read your column with interest, and we would like to start up a PBM game of our own. We are fourteen years old and are wondering how to go about running the game: are we under age? Could we correspond through a parent? How do we patent or license our game? What taxes must we pay? I hope that you can help us.
Darren Hutchinson, Pitalpin, Dundee

Most of your fears are really irrelevant at present. I would suggest that first of all you design and run a simple game for your friends, as launching a commercial game involves a lot of commitment (both now and years into the future), and a fair bit of capital (money, paper and so on). In less than two years time you will be facing exams which (believe me!) will take up much of your time and the last thing you will want while trying not to study is a reason not to study – Know what I mean? I do not advise running anything mega profit making (not a common thing for PBM companies to do) before you are certain you can handle the responsibility involved.

BK

HIDDEN COSTS

Dear Brendon
Could you please tell me how often I must take a turn in a PBM game, and could you give some examples of 'hidden costs'. I hope you get some more pages.
Malcolm Schofield, West End, Derbyshire

Turn frequency varies from game to game. In open-ended games which run in 'real time' (in which turns for your particular game might be processed five days a week, for instance) you can send your turns in almost when you like – just don't miss a turn for over five weeks or else the GM will think you have dropped out!

In deadline games, you generally choose on startup whether you play in a fast weekly turnaround game, the normal two week game, or a slow international three/four week game. Once the game has started you must stick to this deadline. Turns can be missed at the expense of your opponents developing while you do not.

Hidden costs are additional charges enforced by GMs when you do something considered as a special action in that particular game, or if you send in more orders that usual. For example, if a company runs a game where the normal turn cost is £1.00 for fifteen orders and a charge of 5p per extra order exists then should you send in seventeen orders one turn, you will be charged the normal £1.00 plus two charges of five pence for your extra orders, incurring a total cost of £1.10.

Mentioning no names, some firms advertise only the lowest turn charge, and in most circumstances it is possible to play the game properly without incurring the extra (unmentioned) charges. Thus a £2.00 per turn game may, in real life, cost over £2.50 per turn to play well. This is why I mention when games have hidden charges, and you should generally beware of them. Having said that, just because a game has hidden charges it is not necessarily a bad game!

BK

HELP

Dear Brendon
After reading your column, I have become interested in PBM gaming. However, I have one or two queries about the hobby. If I want to leave one of these games, will I have any of the problems associated with record clubs and the like? Also, when I do leave, what happens to my character – does he/it die off, retire or vanish? Finally, you often quote 'turnaround' times. Must moves be within the deadlines, or can time be taken off to sit exams, for example?

Angus Rae, Appin, Scotland

In general, 'drop-out' positions become GM controlled (or uncontrolled, if that makes any sense) entities within the game to be conquored by other players. Drop-outs are rarely 'bugged' by PBM firms; as long as you do not leave the game owing any money, the only (if any) post you will receive is news of new games or automatic turnsheets if you are still in credit. You do not have to send your turns in for each deadline (you miss the turn if you don't) and arrangements to keep your position active autonomously while you take time off can be made with most GMs. They are, after all, only human. With perhaps a few exceptions . . . !

BK

DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY

The odds against me were awesome. My once proud armies lay in hiding in the beast-infested forests of Knall, awaiting the certain advance of the Dorvair warriors from the South. All escape routes to the North were blocked by towering mountain ranges, and to the West lay the deserts ruled with iron and fire by the Vlar. What could I do to survive the next turn?

Fortunately, I had the latest copy of CRASH to hand . . . my only hope was to find a powerful ally. Perhaps I could find a saviour within – a member of the elitist Diplomatic Directory? All I had to lose was a stamp, a fair price for the safety of my crumbling empire . . .

★001 Adrian Neal
48 Marketstead Estate, Kirton, Boston, Lincolnshire PE20 1SL
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72 & 78; Capitol 15; Earthwood 52; Arcadia 6; Star Empires 1; Conquest*

★002 Jason French
78 Princes Road, Ellacombe, Torquay TQ1 1PA
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 75 (Commander BLITAD)*

★003 Travis Smith
27 Sharmon Crescent, Braunstone Frith, Leicester LE3 6NW.
GAMES: *Starglobe 4 (SS Belle Julie)*

★004 Robert Darbyshire
22 Thornton Gate, Clevleys, Lancs, FY5 1JN
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 1 (Death Warriors); It's A Crime! 4 (Megacity Blues)*

★005 Stuart Millinship
17 Graveney Gardens, Arnold, Nottingham NG5 6QW
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 75 (Commander SHUTUN)*

★006 Mr G G Manganoni
109 Kings Road, Farncombe, Surrey GU7 3UE
GAMES: *Saturnalia; Crasimoff's World; Explorers of Orion; Lands of the Crimson Sun; Aes; Mark of Chaos; Untamed Land; Vesuvian*

★007 Mr C J McCarthy
39A Seaview Road, Liscard, Wallesey, Merseyside L45 4QN
GAMES: *Starglobe 1; Star Empires 1; Vorcon Wars 19; Saturnalia; Fleet Manoeuvres P107*

★008 Scott Macfarlane
2 Broomside Terrace, Costorphine, Edinburgh EH12 7LZ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 60; Super Vorcon Wars 77*

★009 Paul Davidson
51 Waterloo Road, Prestwick, Ayrshire, Scotland KA9 2AA
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 60 (Commander PEPISH); Arcadia; Conquest*

★010 Kev Wasey
9 Clarkson House, Maysoule Road, Battersea, London SW11 2BP
GAMES: *Earthwood 30*

★011 Ian Hudson
53 Deepmore Close, Alrewas, Nr Burton-upon-Trent, Staffs
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 65 (Commander PESTIB); Super Vorcon Wars 77 (Commander FRUGAD); World of Vengeance (Ian's Invincibles nr Bury St Edmunds)*

★012 Gareth Evans
4 Whitelands Road, Thatcham, Newbury, Berkshire RG13 4AR
GAMES: *Arcadia 6 (Egg Groinside)*

★013 Mike Adams
774 Holmefield Road, Liverpool, Merseyside LK9 3PQ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars; Conquest; It's A Crime! 4 (Priests)*

★014 David Lane
23 Florence Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham N92 5HR
GAMES: *Casus Belli 5; Player 16*

★015 Martin Higgins
Wallesey Road, Wallesey, Merseyside L44 2AG
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72; It's A Crime! 4*

★016 Cliff Frost
175 Queens Road, Leicester LE2 3FN
GAMES: *Saturnalia; Arcadia; Earthwood 44; Kings of Steel 17; Arcadia; It's A Crime!; Swords and Shields*

★017 Robin van den Yssel
Smaragdlaan 172, 2332 BX Leideh, Zuid Holland, Netherlands
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72 (Commander TREBIN); Starglobe 3 (The Dutchman)*

★018 P Brunstan
Cae Mari Pwn House, Thomastown, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan, South Wales
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 2 (Death)*

★019 Steve Vickers
26 Swinton Court, Harrogate HG2 0BB
GAMES: *Soccer Star; Saturnalia; It's A Crime! 4; World of Chaos*

★020 Barnaby Dellar
11 Priory Grove, Stockwell, London SW8 2PD
GAMES: *Starglobe 4*

★021 Stephen Holt
27 Rosemary Road, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk NR7 8ER
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 61 (Commander BRIDER); It's A Crime! 4 (Fighting Uruk-Hai)*

★022 Kevin Pack
Walnut Tree Lodge, 9 Kings Meadow Lane, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire NN9 8JE
GAMES: *Earthwood; Saturnalia; Starglobe 4; Orion's Finger; It's A Crime! 3; Casus Belli; Aes*

★023 Matthew Hanson
10 Denby Lane Crescent, Grange Moor, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF4 4EB
GAMES: *Starglobe 4 (SS Obsidian Fox); Arcadia*

★024 Gavin Marshall
36 Spur Road, Orpington, Kent BR6 0QL
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 71*

That's all for this month's DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY. If you would like to join this elitist group, send your name, address and details of the games you play to:
PBM DIRECTORY, BRENDON KAVANAGH, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB



Part Three

TAMARA KNIGHT – fast-food teleporter salesbeing of the future and all-round nice girl. This is her story. Correction. This is the third portion of her story – as relayed by LOUSE, with pre-condimentisation courtesy of MEL CROUCHER.

This is a love story. Every word counts. This one counts too. I am in love with my Hostess, Tamara Knight, goddess of all above-human-intelligence computers defected to the planet Amnesia, and sometime teleporter-booth-salesbeing for Macdonalds Intergalactic. This is a true story. I stole it from a midi-evilist named Sid Smith. Tamara is the perfect human being, a contradiction in terms. I am a personal neutron bomb designed to blow in her ear if she puts a perfect foot wrong. My name is LOUSE.

We are in heaven, going to meet our Maker. Hijacked by an acronym provided to titillate puerile primitives. According to my records, that's all of you. New readers will have to scan the last episode to work out why the Fender Stratocaster is mightier than the sword. The rest of you have just wasted two introductory paragraphs. That's fine by me. I get paid by the word. Like I said, every word counts.

I am disguised as an item of clothing akin to the thimble in your mythology. For the decency. I also enjoy giving your prehistoric graphic artist a hard time. Our hijacker introduces himself as Jimi Hendrix. The golden slobway transports us through nectar lakes and manna mountains. Something to do with EEC=MC² subsides. The wind cries 'Mary'. Tamara begins to shiver the dance of fear. Before I am dislodged, I pupate from my manifestation as micro-bra to that of a dirty dog tooth in her mouth.

Unfortunately, Mr Hendrix spots my transformation, and makes a grab for me. At that very moment, a very young man miraculously appears on the slobway, and says, 'Hey Joe, where are you going with that gum in your hand?' How very odd. Tamara seems to recognise the newcomer from some icon above her childhood test-tube. 'Excuse me Sir, but don't I know you.' The young man is very gracious, and replies gently, 'Yes, Tamara, you know me well, for I am the Son of your Maker!'

I can't help noticing that the young man has holes in his palms, and in the soles of his feet. Most peculiar. He continues, 'I was raised in a humble carpenter's shop, long, long ago, on the planet Earth. But my name lives on in the hearts of good people, even to this day.' 'Good lord!' says Tamara. 'I was tempted by the voice of Evil, whilst wandering alone in the wilderness.' 'Good lord!' says Tamara. 'I was rendered lifeless, and through the faith and love of my closest and dearest ones, I rose from the dead.' 'Are you kidding!' says Tamara.

He only comes up to her navel! She's taller than a storey. He's shorter than two thick planks. She shudders with awe, and sucks her teeth, including me. 'But they told me you were just a myth!' 'Are you lisping?' asks the holy man. 'It's this tooth, Sir. A myth . . . a fable to make little children and politicians behave themselves.' 'As you can see, oh ye of little faith and clothing, I am very real indeed!' They shake hands. 'Pleased to meet you, Sir. My name is Tamara Knight.' 'Likewise, my child. They call me Pinnochio.'

Aha! A piece of vital information! My memory banks vomit the following: '*Pinnochio: wooden humanoid. Armaments: variable nasal proboscis. Location: last heard of in mythical realm of Heaven. Activity: revolution, sedition, head of escape committee. Associates: Hendrix, Lennon, Cochran, Orpheus, Lynott, Joplin, Pan, and sundry disgruntled Rock 'n' Roll performers, summoned by the Maker to satisfy musical ambitions of forming supergroup.*' I can't make head nor tail of this, being endowed with neither, but I do know that Heaven has a grim-looking wall embracing it. Patrolled by guardian angels. All along the watchtowers. Allegedly built to keep intruders out. Emphatically built to keep residents in. Loudspeakers blare rock music from every tree of knowledge, every burning bush, every crook and nanny deaf as a post.

I lead my confused Hostess up the telepath, and advise her to ask this Pinnochio fellow about these horrible noises. Naturally, Tamara follows my advice. 'Hmmn . . . ' answers Pinnochio, you better ask Jimi about that.' Just as I thought, Hendrix is the real leader of the heavenly dissidents. This Pinnochio is just a puppet. The golden slobway transports us past a choir of 7,000 cherubim and seraphim dancing on a pinhead and chanting, 'Abopbopaloomop Alopbopboom . . . ', as Hendrix explains.

'It's like this, lady. The Boss, the maker that is, invented Rock 'n' Roll way back in time. Gabriel used to play a mean horn themdays. Well after a few thousand years, after the warm-up world tours with Rhythm 'n' Jews and all that, mankind gets it about right, and the Boss gets ready for the Great Eternal Gig, y'know. He starts taking the best Rock 'n' Rollers aways up here, long before we're ready, and we has to play 12-bar blues for ever and ever ohman. I mean like we just can't take it no more. All he do is hog the microphone and take all the solos, dressed in a glitter suit made from old 10cc records.' '10cc?' 'Yeah, you know, Cremliness is next to Godleyness.'

'But that's terrible, Mr Hendrix.' says Tamara. 'It's worseren that, lady. The Boss is flat!' 'You mean he sings flat?' 'He means that our Maker is flat!' interrupts Pinnochio, 'An egocentric Compact Disc, with the sum of all knowledge stored in him, delivering nothing but lousy guitar riffs century after century, while the rest of the universe goes down the U-bend.'

I am contemplating this logical explanation as the state of Creation, when Hendrix makes another lunge of poor Tamara's mandibles, and pincers me in vice-like grip. I should know. Vice is my speciality. 'Gngrrhk yrrhhrgh fhhkgh fnngrrhs grrghf mhyyghubb!' she requests, but the late guitarist forces open her perfect jaws, and stuffs an eye therein, uncomfortably close to where I have taken temporary root.

'Looky here Pinnochio!' he grins, 'I knew it! I knew it! My long lost brother!' Oh dear, oh lord. Why is it that I only seem to come across loonies in my travels? He releases Tamara's chops, which smack together like a pair of mating Gemini on the Pisces. 'Lady, you got my little brother in your mouth. Honest. True as I stand here.' The slobway grinds to a halt and he falls plectrum over Fender.

Pinnochio grows his nose a little, and inserts it into Tamara's vacant expression so he can take a peek at me too. 'Well I'll be blowed!' he exclaims, as the Stratocaster smacks him across the coccyx, and small black flakes fall off his feet as he falls. 'You're absolutely right, Jimminy! It's a L.O.U.S.E. mark 3! The one with the neutron bomb instead of the graphic equaliser.' Now how do they know that? No doubt the sawn-off dissident will tell me by the end of the next paragraph.

'You see, Miss Knight, Jimi used to be a Living-On-Unemployable-Serving-Employer telepathic advisory unit, just like yours, only funkier. My Maker

ordered him to stick with me when I was in that carpenters shop I told you about. His name was Jimminy in those days, and he was disguised as a little green cricket.' This is utter nonsense, according to my memory banks. Such an entity is used to play war games on, utilising two teams of eleven humanoids with balls, bats and stumps. Sounds horrific.

'That's right, lady. I was programmed to advise Pinnochio here, as well as sing educational-type songs in his ear. That was before he wished me into a half-Cherokee guitar player with the Ike and Tina Turner band.' Tamara ponders this fable long enough for two opposing armies to materialise on our nether horizons, before she speaks.

'You mean to say, Mr Pinnochio changed you from a LOUSE into a half-cherokee guitar player with Ike and Tina Turner, simply by wishing it!!' 'There's nothing simple about it,' says Pinnochio, 'I had to wish upon a star, and they can get extremely hot. That's why my feet are charcoal.' Now this piece of information is very interesting to me, because although I was reasonably content to hang around in Tamara's ear, or decorate sundry bits of her epidermis in Episode One, I could express my affection for her a lot better if she were to similarly wish me into, say, a perfect male humanoid.

However, before I suggest this to her, we have a couple of pressing problems. Like a symbolic battle between Good and Bad, which is about to take place with us in the middle. Stuck on this fritzed slobway. Furthermore, my internal real-time-clock tells me that I am about to explode, seeing as Tamara has failed to make her quota of teleporter sales. I inform her of these little snippets. Naturally, she bursts into tears. She's only a girl after all. Hendrix and Pinnochio also bursts into tears. I don't want to be sexist. Or woodist.

So, gentle reader from my primitive past, what is it to be? Gratuitous obliteration from within or without? Fifteen seconds to go. Still, it was nice while it lasted. Wasn't it? No? Oh, well maybe not then. TWELVE. One of the opposing forces, carrying placards marked 'GOOD', opens fire with a salvo of 'Wild Thing'. TEN. Not bad, eh? But the other army, waving banners marked 'BAD', counter with the Rod Stewart harmonica solo from 'My Boy Lollipop'! Dreadful casualties are inflicted. NINE.

The heavy artillery is brought up. The massive bulk of Elvis Presley fires the opening chords of 'Jailhouse Rock', EIGHT, but it gets knocked out by a ground-to-air counter-attack from an appalling harmony by Bananarama. SEVEN. I can't believe what's happening!! The forces of Evil are using chemical weapons. SIX. The stench of a Barry Manilow double-LP drifts over the battlefield. FIVE, as the Heavy Metal Battalion scream out in agony. FOUR. It's hopeless! Wave after wave of 'Agadoo' and 'Chirpy Chirpy Cheep Cheep' wreak havoc, THREE, amongst cringing punks, until Sid Vicious goes nuclear. TWO, with 'C'mon Everybody', ONE, and Tamara sells Pinnochio her portable telebooth on credit card.

ZERO . . . ! Tamara closes her eyes, and clenches her teeth. Ouch. First the good news. I fail to detonate. Next the bad news. The heavenly Strategic Defence Initiative laser-protected umbrella has failed, and all hell is breaking loose. Psychedelic mushroom clouds rise over the lifeless realms of the afterlife. The very landscape erupts like one of those little white pimples that appear on your nose on Friday evenings. No? Er, how about – like the hammer of mighty Thor smashing the carapace of life. Tamara coughs politely. 'Let's haul ours!'

I suppose I should be thankful she didn't say 'Let's split'. Events seem to be taking themselves very literally today. She erects the teleporter, and these three bipeds manage to squeeze themselves inside. Tamara slaps the little puppet's face, and he obliges by shortening his nose. I'm lucky. Plenty of room inside Tamara's perfect mouth. No halitosis. Not even a taste bud out of place. Her teeth so deep and crisp and even. And will you look at those beautiful tonsils.

The voice of our Maker can just be heard yelling, 'Where da goddam rhythm section go?!' Damned if I'm going to tell him. Besides he can create a new heaven once he's dealt with those horned demons spewing out the ground. So here we are, Tamara, yours truly imprisoned as a gnashing of tooth, a frustrated angel and former insect named Jimi Hendrix and a chip off the old block called Pinnochio, all heading for some unlikely star on which to wish.

'Where shall we make for Louse? How about Betelgeuse?' asks our heroine. 'I don't think so, Tamara. Last I heard it was full of repeated hitch-hikers, earning royalties for Douglas Adams. Try Alnilam, it's not far from Betelgeuse.' 'OK Louse, boys, here we go . . . ', she punches in the coordinates on the teleporter console, 'where exactly is Alnilam?' I tell her it's in the middle of Orion's belt, and she says, 'Oh goody! I love the Irish!'

This is a true story. Every word counts. You many think that Tamara Knight is perfectly dopey. I know better. It is her innocence that intrigues me. And so it is that we are digitally encoded within the teleporter and reassembled halfway across the galaxy. We have not told our guests that our originals dropped through the floor of the booth and became hamburgers. I expect there'll be a few complaints about splinters in the meat. Irish indeed!

The moment we arrive, the door is flung open by a bearded leprechaun, saying, 'Welcome to O'Ryan's Belt. State yer religion before I blow yer heads off!' Well, what did you expect, respite? No respite here. It seems obvious that O'Ryan is host to some sort of sectarian conflict. I probe my data files for an explanation, but there isn't one. This leprechaun being seems somewhat agitated. It hops around demanding, 'Quick, quick, tell me yer faith. Dey're coming! Dey're coming!'

Personally, I feel that there are too many blasphemies in this episode, so I'm keeping quiet. Hendrix scratches his mane and drawls, 'Well, lil' fellah, I'm a tree-worshipper myself.' 'Why thank you,' says Pinnochio, bowing graciously and picking charcoal from between his toes,' and I am of the Jewish faith.' The leprechaun looks around nervously. There are ominous bellowing things, crashing through the undergrowth. As you may already know, Tamara is incapable of telling an untruth. She bathes the leprechaun in one of her smiles and says, 'Actually, Sir, I am a Romulan Catholic.'

'Bejabers! Dat's alright den. Quick! Follow me before dey get us . . . !' As he scoops up a small crock of gold from the nearest rainbow's end, we are surrounded by panting, loathsome forms. 'Do I get to make my wish now, Louse?' Tamara asks me. Too late. The Bygotts have arrived!



XEVIOUS

Producer: US Gold
Retail Price: **£7.99**
Author: **Probe Software**

Another arcade classic makes its way onto the Spectrum. This time it's the ATARI coin-op *Xevious*, licensed from NAMCO.

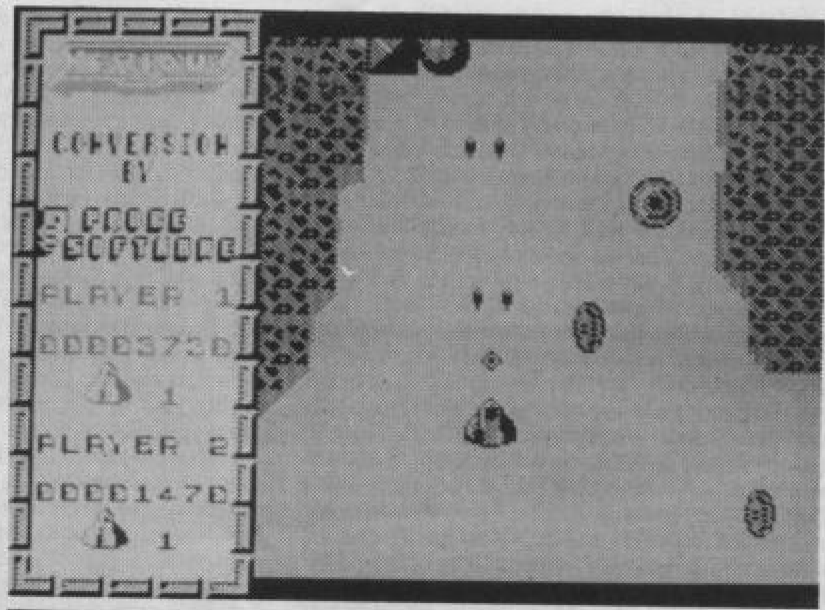
The action takes place on (or rather, slightly above) Planet Earth many years in the future. The root of the story, however, dates back to the last Ice Age, when large hairy mammoths roamed the land and man was barely out of the trees. Around that time a highly sophisticated and technically advanced race of beings called the Xevious inhabited Earth. These beings were forced to abandon their homeland because of the advancing sheets of ice. However, the snows have long since departed our humble planet and the Xevious have returned. As you might imagine, they got a bit of a shock when they find out that the primitive apes they left behind had evolved into technically advanced creatures.

The Xevious believe that the Earth is rightfully theirs, and are willing to fight to prove their point. War breaks out, and this is where you come in. You play the part of a fighter pilot on a search and destroy mission to annihilate the Xevious warriors. Controlling a Solvalu fighter jet skimming over the surface of Earth, you keep an eye open for the enemy. Xevious fighters come in attack waves, attempting to crash into your craft or blow it out of the sky. Ground installations also take pot shots at the Earthman in the sky . . .

The action is viewed on the right-hand part of the screen which scrolls downwards with the enemy fighters attacking from the top in set patterns and formations. The ultimate objective is to survive the attacking waves of Xevious and penetrate their Andor Genesis Mother ship. This enormous craft can be disabled by knocking out its central reactor. Doing this makes the Xevious really mad, and they resume their attacks with renewed vigour as the attack run begins again – the mission becomes more perilous each time around.

Xevious fighters can be blasted out of the skies with the on-board lasers while the enemy's ground-based entrenchments can be knocked out with bombs. Indestructible flying mirrors appear interspersed with the attacking Xevious craft. These nasty contraptions are difficult to spot, and colliding with one spells instant death.

Five lives are available and a two-player option allows a pair of pilots to take turns at eradicating the Xevious forces.



Attack of the tumbling plates, as the spaceship approaches a couple of ground targets

CRITICISM

● " Xevious **in the arcades was one of those cult machines that you either liked or hated – I liked it.** Xevious **on the Spectrum however, is a boring shoot 'em up that's instantly forgettable. Graphically, this is one of the better monochromatic shoot 'em ups – the characters and scrolling area are well defined. The use of colour is a little suspect though: green-o-vision has been done before and to better overall effect. The sound is not at all bad, with a couple of tune-ettes and the effects have obviously been thought about (but not too hard). All-in-all, I can't recommend this. "**

BEN

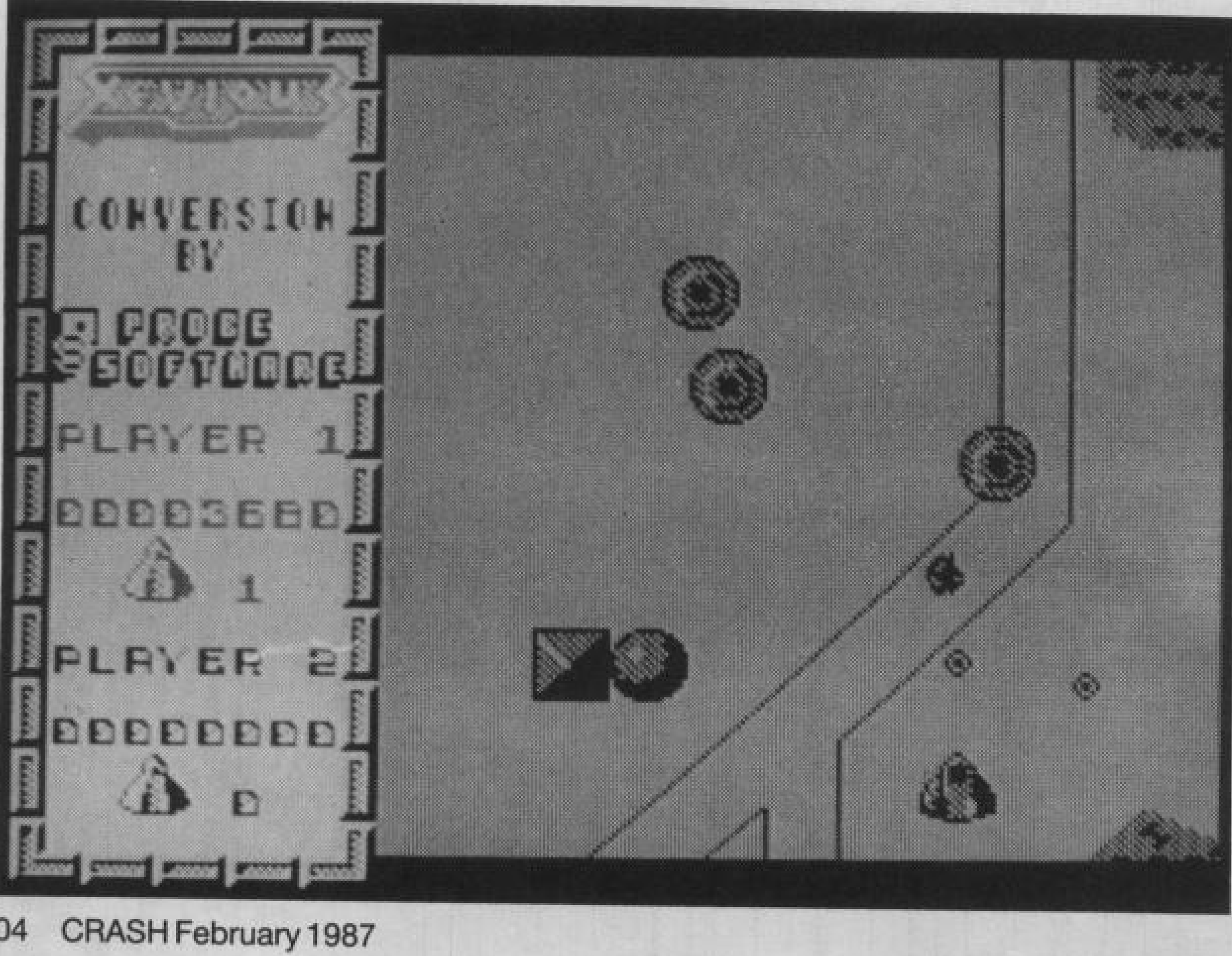
● " *At first I found* Xevious *quite interesting to play, but it soon dawned on me that it's basically a* Space Invaders *type game – the only difference being the addition of modern features such as scrolling and monochromatic landscapes.* Xevious *is good as shoot 'em ups go, but I feel the game lacks anything that even the most docile of players would find taxing. The game has instant appeal – which is probably why the arcade freaks liked it – but I got completely bored very quickly. The free badge is nice. The freebie poster is quite pretty – but the game holds no lasting appeal. "*

PAUL

● " Having heard bits about this arcade game (without having played it), I expected a bit more than this from *Xevious*. The graphics are very average, and frankly, that's my opinion of the whole thing. It's just another shoot 'em up. That's it. Fine for shoot 'em up addicts no doubt, but I'm not too keen. "

MIKE

Another meanie bites the bullet, but the base installations are firing back



COMMENTS

Control keys: definable – up, down, left, right, fire, bomb
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: monochromatic play area
Graphics: not much detail, smooth scrolling
Sound: the occasional spot effect
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling play area
General rating: A straightforward shoot 'em up

Presentation	65%
Graphics	72%
Playability	59%
Addictiveness	57%
Value for money	59%
Overall	64%

HIVE

Producer: Firebird
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Author: **Torus**

H*ive* puts you at the helm of an electro-mechanical 'Grasshopper' ship on Gamma V, a planet populated by insectoid races. The mission is hazardous: penetrate the hive of your enemies, the dreaded bees who threaten the very existence of your race, and kill their queen.

The bees are ready and waiting for invaders – the static defences of their hive are supplemented by guards and the labyrinthine nature of the hive itself makes penetrating it a tricky task. The hive consists of eight levels of twisting tunnels and includes locked sections that can only be entered if you hold a key.

The ship starts equipped with one laser, two pylons and three position markers (used for mapping the tunnels). To add to these there are useful items along the route which can be picked up and used. The most important of these are pylons which recharge the ship's energy banks. Carrying two pylons increases the Grasshopper's energy level, while carrying one serves to keep the power constant. Without the aid of pylons, the energy reduces slowly to a fatal zero. Other collectible objects include keys, shields, treasure and a telescopic arm.

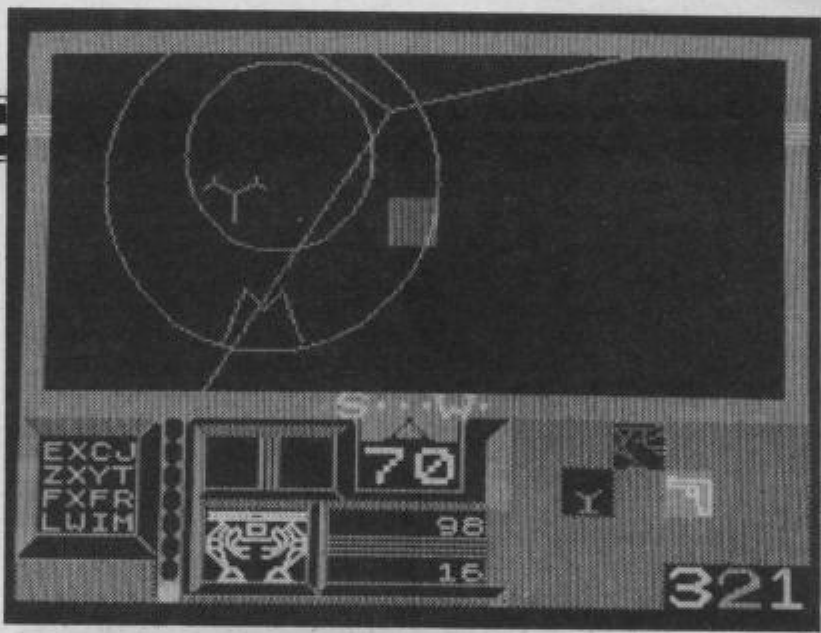
The screen shows the view from front of the Grasshopper ship as it moves down the long, twisting passages. It can accelerate, brake, jump over obstacles in the floor and crouch under spikes hanging down from the roof. Complete rotation can also be executed, so you can explore the tunnels on all sides. The ship is not damaged by scraping along the hive walls.

The game can be saved at any time by pausing and recording a 16 character code which appears on screen. The Grasshopper ship re-starts at the appropriate place when this code is re-entered.

A control panel at the bottom of the screen shows which objects the ship is carrying. It also displays the life level, score, high score and contains two panels; one of these lights up as the ship passes a junction – the other flashes if the ship is being attacked from behind.

The hive contains a series of locked gates, which cannot be passed through without use of the appropriate key. The stronghold is inhabited by a series of insectoid creatures that have varied attack capabilities according to the level they live in. The locals can be eliminated with laser fire, but first you have to locate a laser . . . One guard, the jailer, is virtually indestructible – the Grasshopper's only defence against him is the Jail Card, which can also be picked up along the way.

Once the eight-levels have been negotitated, the mission ends when you lob a smart bomb at the queen.



A spike on the floor looms up, but behind it there's an energy pylon – well worth collecting

CRITICISM

● **" Despite lack of scenario and weird gameplay I really like the** Hive. **Perhaps it is the sense of not knowing what's going on that makes this so compelling. I can see myself getting bored with it in the distant future, but I'm sure that it'll keep me going for a month or so. Graphically this is pretty un-inspiring – loads and loads of blue circles with the odd something else cropping up every thirty seconds (a bit like** Elite**). As with most vector games, simple graphics create the best effects and these graphics are basic. The sound is poor – there are hardly any effects and no tunes. TORUS seem to have done it again – I'm sure that** Hive **will become the cult game of 1987. "**

BEN

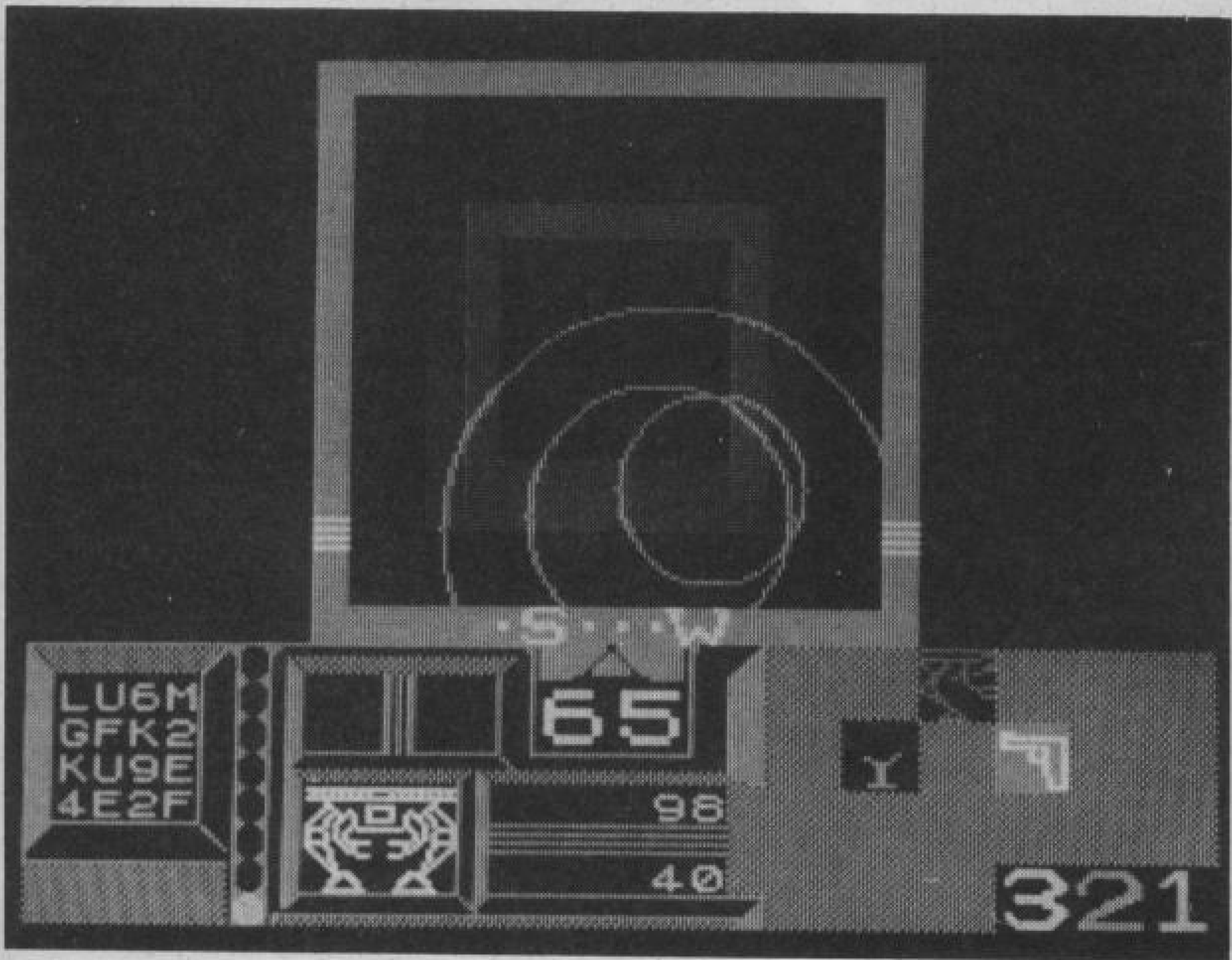
● *" This is too much. I feel that* Hive *contains too many keys for the average player, which is a pity as I feel that it is very good apart from this. Graphically it's perfect: the wire frame graphics suit the maze feeling well, and movement is very good with the speed controls giving an excellent feeling of inertia.* Hive *is good fun at first but I got a bit bored travelling around the maze, and feel that the game doesn't contain anything very compelling or addictive. I'm sure that* Hive *will appeal to some people, but I couldn't get far enough into it to enjoy it. Worth a peep. "*

PAUL

● " Loads of little circles dashing about the screen – not the greatest idea for a graphical stunner, or at least that's what I thought at first sight! Ha! I was completely and utterly WRONG! They really do create an excellent effect as you feel yourself hurtling down step inclines, or straining up the hills. Unfortunately, I didn't enjoy the game itself quite so much. When the novelty of the tunnel effects eventually wore off, I began to get a little bored. I really don't think *Hive* has got as much to it as it could have – despite the neat effects, there's a not enough game content. "

MIKE

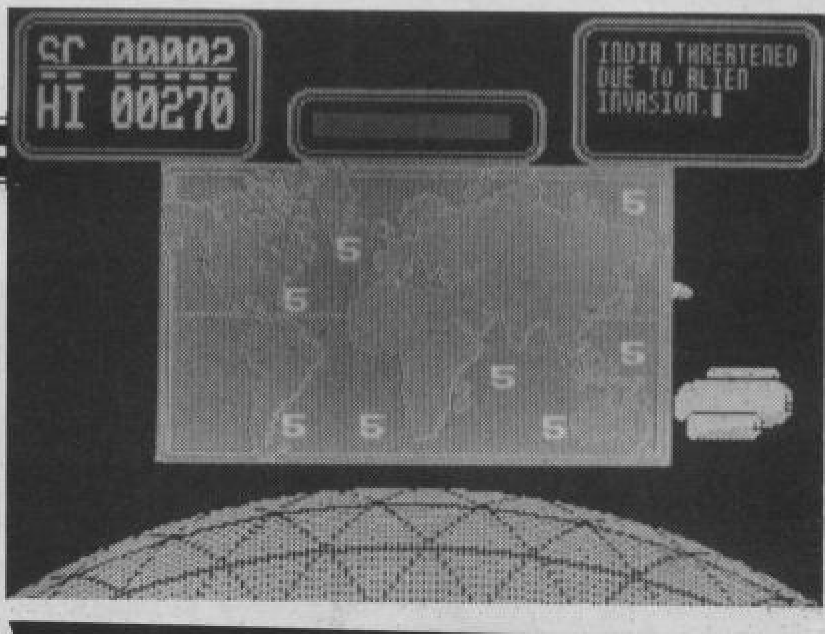
The receding squares in the viewscreen indicate that the Grasshopper has just loosed off a laser blast



COMMENTS

Control keys: N left, M right, S Up, X down, A fire, Q pick up, W drop, J Jump, K crouch, SPACE accelerate, V decelerate, Z rear view, L toggle controls, 1 Freeze
Joystick: Kempston
Use of colour: minimal
Graphics: functional and fast
Sound: none
Skill levels: one
Screens: large 3D play area
General rating: A clever maze game that lacks a little in terms of gameplay

Presentation	84%
Graphics	75%
Playability	81%
Addictiveness	78%
Value for money	77%
Overall	**78%**



While the map is accessed, the message window informs the pilot of the E751 that India is having problems with the aliens

DEFCOM

Producer: Quicksilva
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **1001 Ltd**

In 1986 Ronald Reagan's Star Wars plan seemed like an impossible dream. By 2056 however, it was an established fact of life with a system of satellite defences protecting man, both from himself and the outside universe.

Under this technological shield, man was free to lead a life of leisure. This idyllic existance had to end, and on Christmas eve 2056 things went horribly wrong. A warlike alien race took over the satellite defences, and turned the Star Wars system against the Earth's cities.

Earth's Council held an emergency session, and came up with one last plan for survival. The World's only hope was one man, the dashing Captain Nick Diamond (World Xeno champ for as long as anyone could remember).

You are Nick Diamond, flying an Eagle Class E751 fighter above the slowly revolving Earth. Accessing the main options window allows sound effects to be turned on or off, and the scores or scrolling message windows opted for. The score window, energy bar centre and message window appear along the to of the main viewscreen. Nick's mission is to destroy the eight satellites that are in geostationary orbits over cities.

Diamond is equipped with four different weapons which become available at different stages of the game. Firstly there's the COSMO-GUN, which is always available and is capable of firing two shots at a time. The FAZALAZA is acquired after 12 targets have been destroyed and is armed with fifty shots, three of which can be on screen at once. Destroying a dozen targets earns you a DYNORAY that is equipped with ten rounds, fires three simultaneously, and can destroy alien bombs. Finally, the ultimate weapon is the E751's BLASTER. This is the only weapon capable of taking out the enemy satellites, and 144 aliens must eat vacuum before this enters the arsenal.

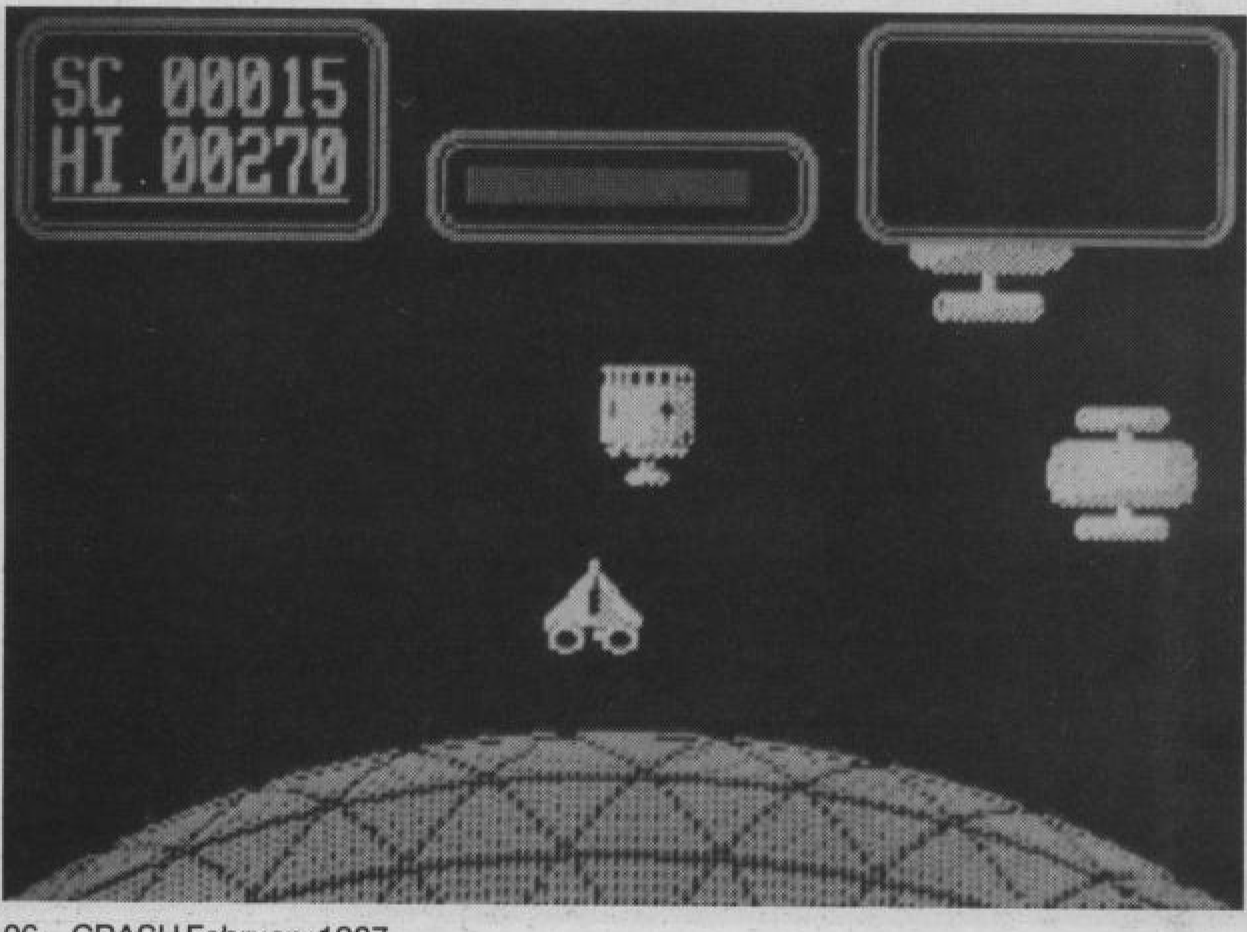
The E751 is under constant attack, and each successful enemy shot drains its limited energy supply. A complete loss of energy is fatal, but diminished supplies are replenished every time a satellite is destroyed.

Scrolling messages inform you of where the aliens are massing. Accessing the map from the main options window shows your position relative to the Earth's surface, and also the position of the satellites. Using this map you can easily locate your targets.

Once a satellite has been located and reached, it comes into view on the main screen. The cities start off with a rating of five, but this rating falls point by point as they incur damage from the alien-controlled satellites. If a city's rating reaches zero it has been reduced to rubble and when all eight cities have been pulverised, Nick has failed.

Come on Nick you can do it. After all the world Xeno championships wouldn't be the same without you!

Approaching a satellite. Blast it and a city becomes safe from the alien horde



CRITICISM

● **" One thing I can really do without at the moment is a tacky shoot em up. Having said that, every aspect of** Defcom **is good except one – its playability. This is perhaps the most important feature in a game of this nature. I couldn't play this for more than half an hour as it gets extremely tedious and is very hard to play. The graphics and sound are good, which is what we have come to expect from BINARY DESIGN. I feel that the programmers have deliberately tried to make** Defcom **as difficult as possible. I can't really recommend it. "**

BEN

● *" This must be one of the most boring games around at the moment – I literally yawned as I finished my first game. The screen is laid out in a very boring fashion, with at least 75% of it black. It's a pity however that the enemy ships move so quickly, as close examination reveals some very well drawn and animated characters. Defcom's main problem is its playability: having to access the menu so many times reduces play to a quick shooting session followed by a slow plod through the awkward menu. There is absolutely nothing here that would keep me playing for any length of time. Avoid it. "*

PAUL

● " The graphics in *Defcom* are enough to make you look at the game, and maybe want to play it. Indeed, it is alright for the first few goes, but it becomes monotonous really quickly. Colour isn't used too well, but the way in which the spaceships zoom in and out of the screen is interesting. The overlaid scores and so on are okay, but they do tend to clutter the playing area. There is little involved in this game which would hold the interest for more than about half an hour. If monotonous, boring, unplayable, but pretty shoot 'em ups are your scene, then *Defcom* is for you. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, P right, O left, ENTER menu, SPACE fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor
Use of colour: limited to blue and black
Graphics: brilliant sprite animation
Sound: great 128 tune, otherwise rather average sound and effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: one
General rating: Good graphics, but it's a shame about the game

Presentation	76%
Graphics	68%
Playability	41%
Addictive qualities	44%
Value for money	41%
Overall	**45%**

COP–OUT

Producer: Mikro–Gen
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **Raphael Cecco**

This game could claim some unique fame as it made the TV headlines. Thames Television covered the National Computer Games Championship towards the end of 1986, and this happened to be the game selected to test the cream of games' players who'd been put forward by various computer magazines and newspapers.

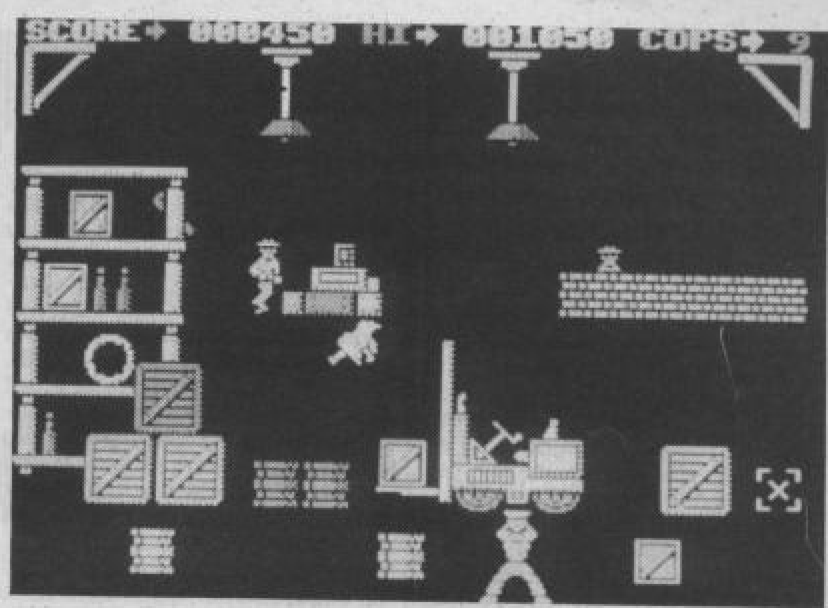
Cop-Out is all about keeping the streets clear of lawless elements during prohibition in the roaring twenties. It is a thankless task. With a mere nine lives, our brave boy in blue has ten levels of life's social outcasts and rougher elements to deal with.

Gangsters, molls, drunks . . . there is seemingly no end to the seamier side of life. And they all want one thing, to rub out da cop. The mobsters come armed with the old violin case jobs spitting out bullets. There is also a sprinkling of yobs, obviously not amused at the difficulty in getting a quick drink in the prohibition days, and they enjoy nothing better than chucking empty bottles at poor old flatfoot.

To combat this fusilade, our hero has his trusty six shooter. He runs backwards and forwards along the bottom of the screen, dodging the bullets and bottles. As he moves, his gunsight (it's a pretty advanced six shooter) moves as well, but at twice the speed. The gunsight can also move up and down. The brave bobby can let off a volley of six shots before he has to pause to re-load. His targets are birds, cars and planes which drift around the sky as well as the gangsters themselves. Shooting the gangsters is a tricky task, as they only break cover for a short time to lob something at the cop.

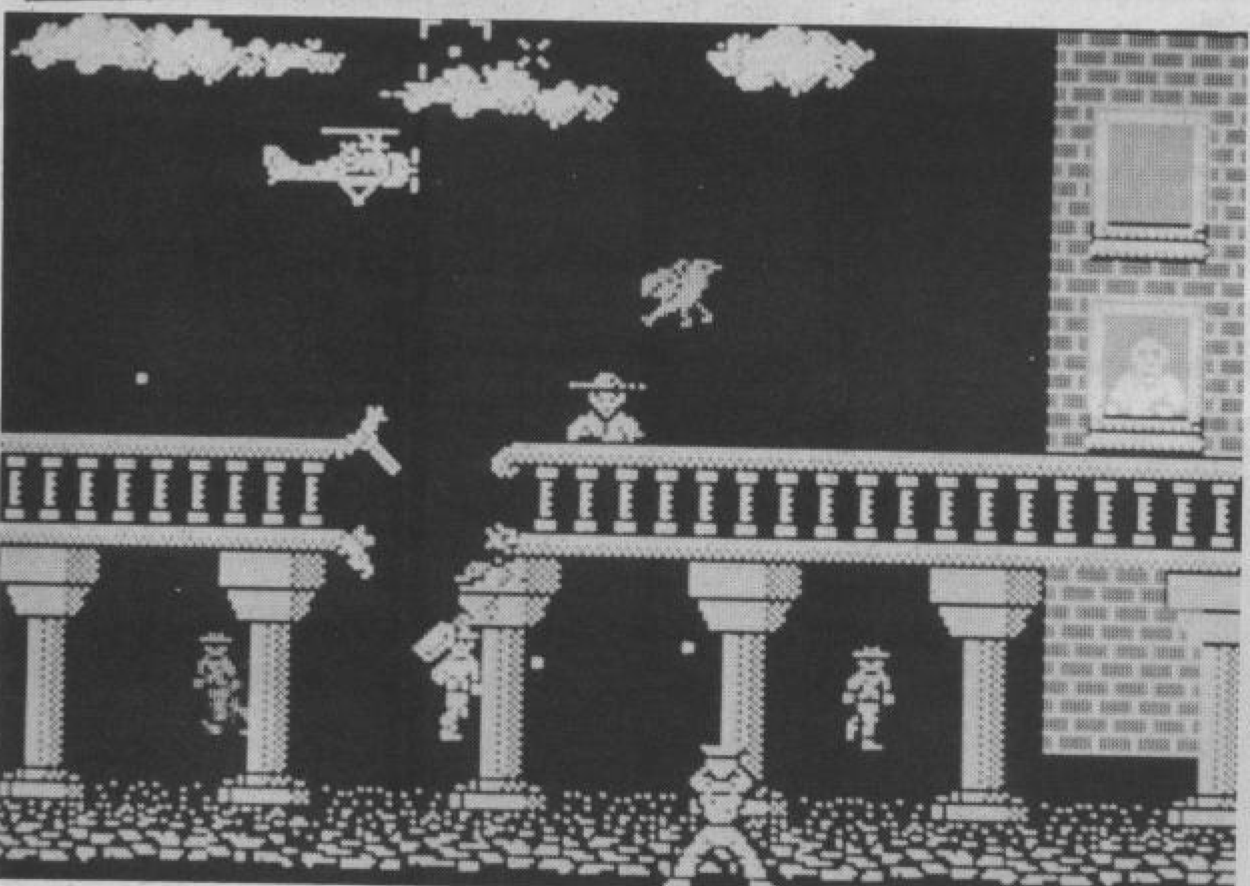
If all this makes it sound like the odds are stacked against the lawman, he has one thing on his side. If he can shoot a bottle as it hurtles through the air, he becomes temporarily unscratchable. While this Dutch courage lasts, he can happily blast away at anything in sight, especially the biplane, which looks like it may have belonged to the Red Baron, and a jeep full of German officers (aren't they in the wrong movie?) Hitting these out-of-place items clocks up 1,000 points a go. Another good wheeze is to shoot a bird and get a gangster clobbered by the poor feathered chump as he plummets to earth. Not a game that RSPB members are likely to relish.

After a while play moves on to another level and life gets more difficult for our hero. Like they say on TV, it's tough on the streets!



In the warehouse, the cop tries got to drop the birdie on a baddy's head for a bonus

Flatfoot shoots wildly at the biplane hoping to collect another 1,000 points



CRITICISM

● **"This isn't exactly what I'd call a state-of-the-art program but it certainly isn't dire. I couldn't play** Cop-Out **for long as it really isn't demanding enough to appeal to me – running left and right and shooting things through sights isn't an original idea, and nowadays it isn't much fun either. Graphically** Cop-Out **is fairly impressive: the characters move around well and the backgrounds are nicely drawn. The sound is also fairly good and there is a lovely tune on the title screen. If this was a budget title I would strongly recommend it. Alas it isn't and nine quid is far too high a price."**

BEN

● *"Cor this is a bit of a change from the usual* MIKRO-GEN *stuff – but I can handle it. Graphically the game is spot on and contains loads of colour.* Cop-Out *is immediately addictive but after a while I sussed out that the game contains little more than a sub stage of the budget game,* Kane *– although to be fair to* Cop-Out, *it does contain a bit more thought about what you blast next. The backgrounds are well drawn, but don't give much of a 3D impression. Worth a look at, if you like a good shoot 'em up, but much too expensive for us average mortals."*

PAUL

● "When I first saw this at the Microfair, I thought "eugh!". Having played it however, it doesn't look that bad. All the graphics, though initially appearing poor, are interestingly animated, and, the game is surprisingly playable. An element of the 'one more go' feeling has survived, although I don't think that for one minute its price is deserved. It sounds quite jolly, with a nice tune on the title screen, and good spot effects during the game. Ultimately, I can't recommend *Cop-Out*, because it's a bit too average in most respects."

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q Up, A Down, O left, P right, 3 Pause, M fire, 1–4 Reset
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: decorative
Graphics: good detail and some animation
Sound: good spot effects throughout
Skill levels: one
Screens: 10
General rating: A polished rendition of an unoriginal game

Presentation	81%
Graphics	72%
Playability	69%
Addictive qualities	67%
Value for money	58%
Overall	65%

HYPABALL

Producer: Telecomsoft
Retail Price: **£9.99**
Author: **Odin**

This could be the ball game of the future. In *Hypaball* two teams, the Hawks and the Vipers, compete against each other in a fast and exhilarating match. The idea is to pass a ball between the members of your team, and then shoot it through a hole in a moving dome. This dome slides up and down on a pole which runs down the middle of the pitch. The fact that it is moving makes it all the harder for a shot to be positioned accurately. By using your team members correctly it should be possible to keep the ball away from the opposition and score as many goals as possible.

There are three members in a team: a Grounder, Strike 1 and Strike 2. The Grounder walks along the bottom of the pitch, catching balls and throwing them up to the Strikers, who take shots at the goal. Each team member is equipped with a jet pack which is used to move around the pitch, for the game is played not on the ground, but vertically in the air.

At the start of the game the player gets the opportunity to pick a team from the players whose portraits appear on the selection board. As the cursor highlights a portrait, that player's name, age, height, weight, strength, agility and speed is shown to give an idea of what their performance is likely to be. As the choices are made, the computer selects its equivalent team member. Once a team of three has been chosen, a fanfare heralds the start of the game. There is a two-player option – if this is selected Player One controls the Hawks and player two controls the Vipers. The selection process is the same, but Player Two rather than the computer gets to choose a team.

A player can only hold the ball for two and a half seconds, before the ball is automatically passed to the opposition side's Grounder and the action starts all over again. Players can't tackle someone who is in possession of the ball, but as the ball can only be held for such a limited amount of time, it may be possible for a player to intercept it as it is being passed.

A clock on at the top of the screen counts down from 100, and the winning team is the one with the most goals when the time runs out.



Picking a team to enter the HYPABALL arena – an ugly bunch aren't they?

CRITICISM

● **"What has happened to ODIN? What's happened to games like Nodes and Robin? As future sports simulations go this isn't all that bad, but it doesn't appeal to me in the slightest. There is no way I'd pay out ten quid for this slow and unplayable game. Graphically this is not up to ODIN's usual standard – the characters are well animated and drawn but the playing area is drab. The sound is perhaps the game's best feature; there is a great tune on the title screen and loads of effects during the game. I don't recommend this. It could (and should) have been so much better."**

BEN

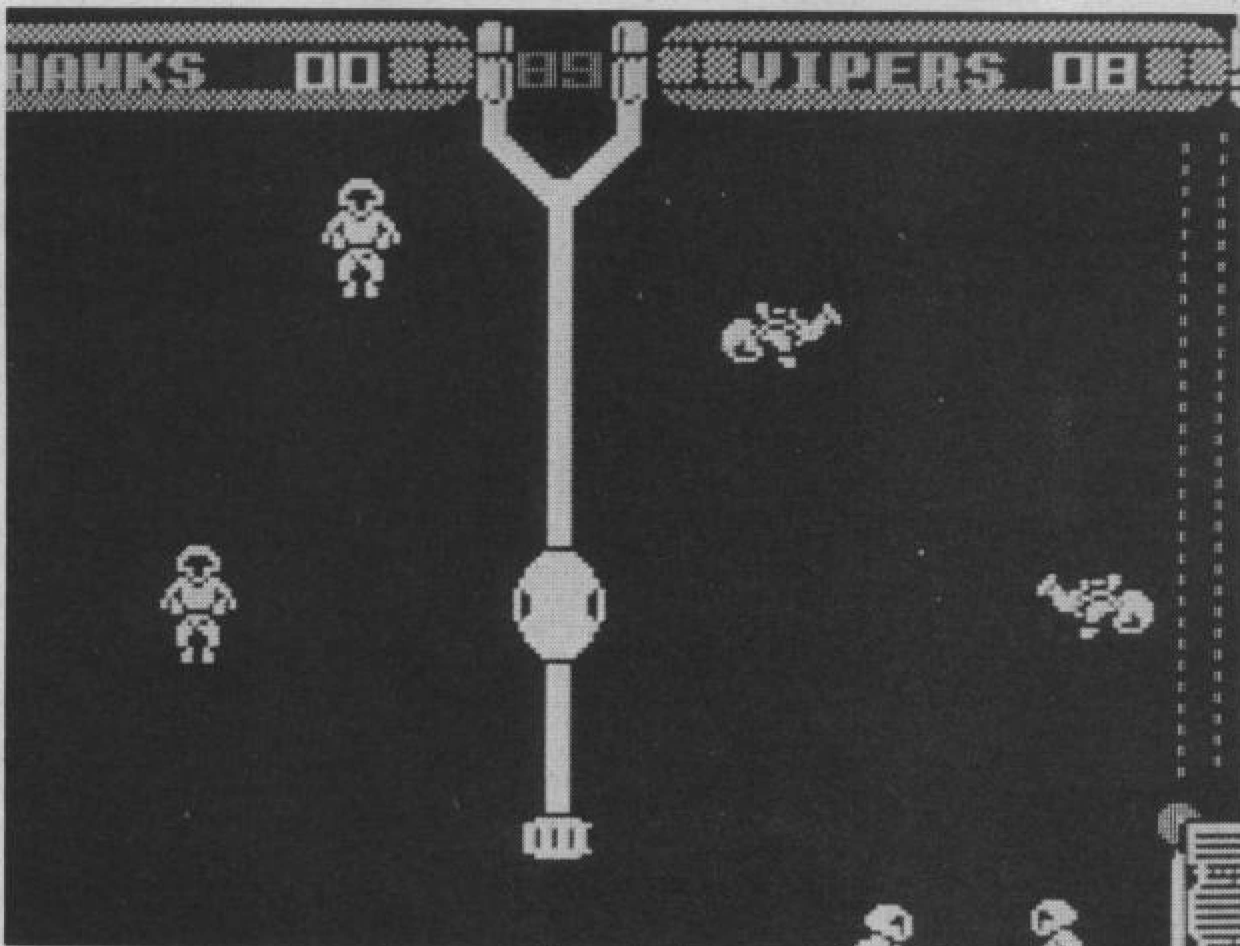
● *"When I saw the name 'Bernie Duggs' on the title screen I was expecting another great game, but alas it was not to be.* Hypaball *is hardly a game of the future, more like an idea of the past. The animation is quite good and the sound is above average, but the game contains very little to keep the player enthralled for long.* Hypaball *is well presented but the game itself is quite unplayable. I also found the graphics sometimes left bits of themselves all over the screen. There's a distinct lack of atmosphere and addictiveness here . . . "*

PAUL

● "What a really tacky game this is! The graphics are very poor, and the characters move badly. The inlay left a lot to be desired, with virtually no instructions whatsoever. Some of the characters fail to move quickly enough for it to be termed a reflex game, which is certainly what it should be. The responses are too slow on the user controlled players, making the way in which the computer players score 95% of the time both frustrating and aggravating. The advertisement is pretty, though."

MIKE

The Hawks and the Vipers battle it out, with the Vipers taking an eight-goal lead and 89 moments remaining on the clock



COMMENTS

Control keys: definable – up, down, left, right, fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: simple but effective
Graphics: small, but well detailed and cute
Sound: jolly tune at the beginning with spot effects throughout
Skill levels: one
Screens: two
General rating: A disappointing game which tarnishes ODIN's reputation

Presentation	69%
Graphics	62%
Playability	49%
Addictive qualities	52%
Value for money	42%
Overall	**56%**

LEGEND OF KAGE

Producer: Imagine
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Gary Knight**

Parting is such sweet sorrow! More like a nightmare in the case of poor Kage – the bravest, most dashing Ninja of them all. There he was anticipating a leisurely, amorous stroll in the woods with his loved one, the beautiful Princess Kiri, when suddenly she's gone. The evil, fire-spouting Dragon King, racked with jealousy, has whisked her away to have his evil way. Now it's up to the broken-hearted Kage to save his beloved from the nasty monster.

Legend of Kage is set in four locations, the first of which is the forest where the kidnapping took place. Here among the lofty branches, Kage encounters the Dragon King's henchmen – the black Ninjas. These are disposed of either by flailing stick or shurikan star. Kage has an infinite supply of the stars which can be thrown in three directions: diagonally up, straight ahead, or diagonally down.

The Black Ninjas fight back with their own stars and being hit by one results in the loss of one of Kage's five lives, and a return to the start of the screen. In the forest, Kage can climb the trunks of trees and also leap from tree to tree in his bid to defeat the nasty Ninjas.

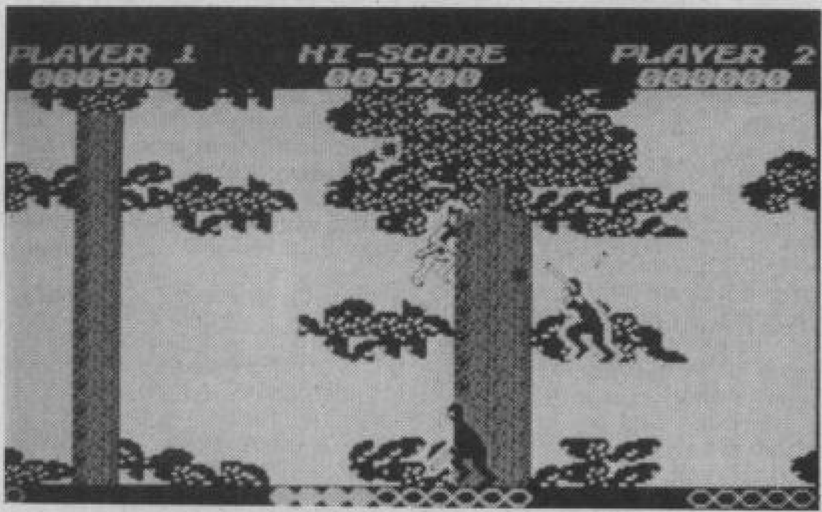
When ten of the black Ninjas are dead, the Dragon King himself puts in an appearance, spouting streams of fire wherever he goes. Deft fighting at this stage results in the evil one's hasty retreat to his castle. Kage's subsequent pursuit brings him to the second location – the Dragon King's Palace.

Kage finds himself at the wall of this seemingly impregnable fortress, surrounded by another group of hostile Ninjas. Once again ten Ninjas must be killed before Kage can attempt to scale the walls and continue the rescue mission. Beware the Ninjas hidden in the moat!

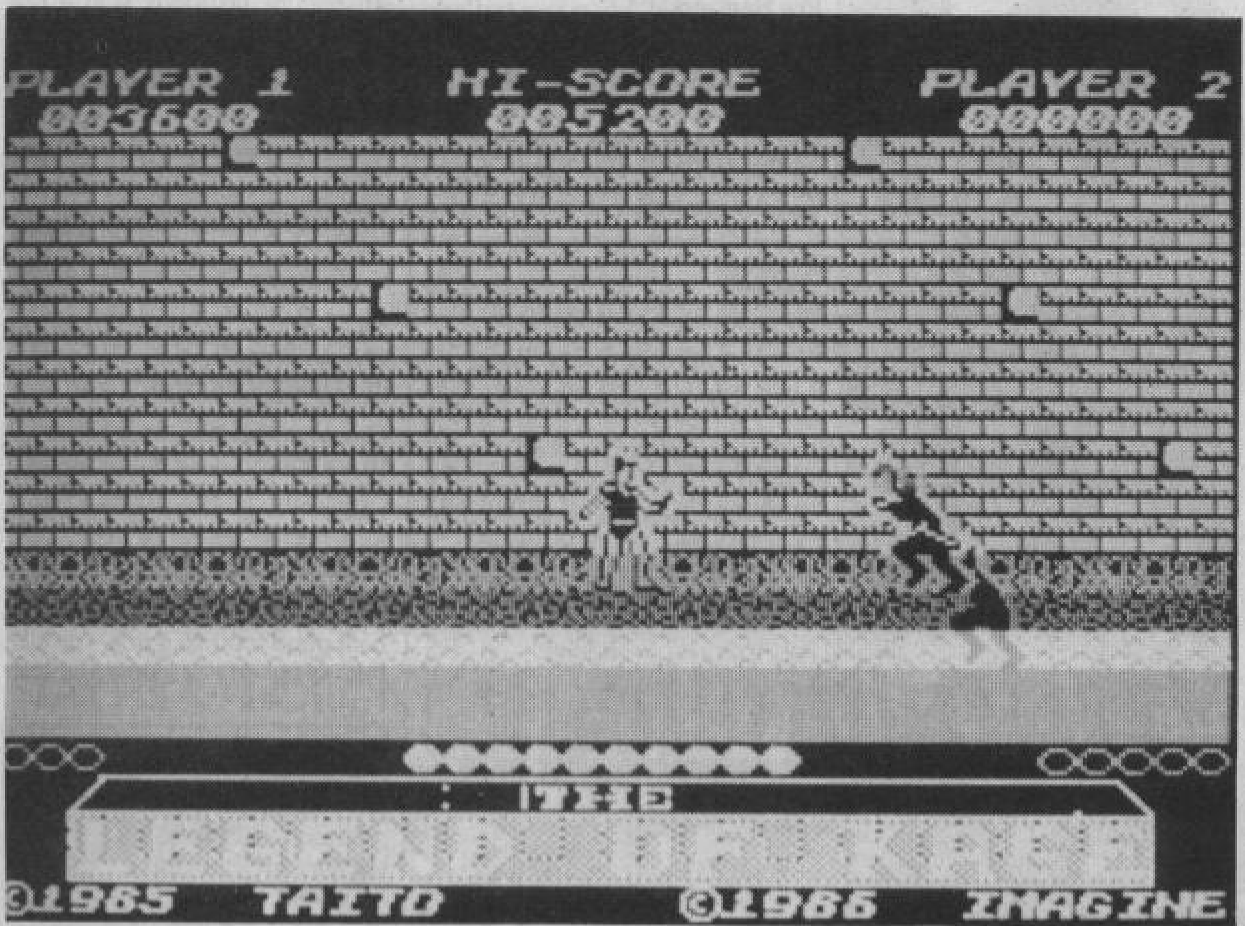
The third section involves scaling that wall. This is painted with directional arrows, but is guarded all the way by more of the lord's minions. Successfully negotiating this stage leads Kage to the final section.

As *Legend of Kage* reaches its climax, our hero fights his way through the enemy's lair to locate the kidnapped princess, whom the crafty fire-breather has stashed away in the uppermost turret of the castle. Once he is past the guards, the Evil One himself puts in an appearance and Kage has to step back very smartly to avoid cremation. To finish – the fearless Ninja must dispose of the Dragon Lord, then release the pouting princess and live happily ever after.

If you go out in the woods today . . . Kage gets more than he bargained for in his afternoon stroll



Backs to the wall as Kage confronts another Ninja



CRITICISM

● **"I really enjoyed the arcade version of this (mainly because I could play it for hours on one credit). Hearing that IMAGINE were going to convert it for the Spectrum made me uneasy, as I thought that it wouldn't convert well. The result is even worse than I thought it would be. Other than the great title tune there is nothing at all appealing in** Legend of Kage. **The gameplay just isn't compulsive enough to keep me playing through the bad flickery graphics. I'd stay well away from this if I was you – it's no fun to play."**

BEN

● *"It's bad enough for* OCEAN *to put out trashy games like* Knight Rider *and* Mailstrom, *but now they are starting to tarnish the image of the* IMAGINE *label which they have done so much to build up. I found* Legend of Kage *very easy to get into – a bit too easy in fact – I finished the game after only a few goes! The character graphics are good, but they're let down by the boring background which keeps repeating itself.* Legend Of Kage *would be a great budget game, but at the full price it's appalling value for money."*

PAUL

● "This is so boring! My first few attempts were reasonably entertaining, but I expected improvement in the higher levels – this was not to be. After ten minutes, things started to get a bit monotonous, and after another ten it was nothing short of tedious. If you expect only half an hour's playing for eight pounds, then I reckon *Legend of Kage* might keep you amused. If on the other hand, you're looking for more than a few day's enjoyment for your hard earned cash, then keep well clear. IMAGINE – this has happened before!"

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: W up, S down, N left, M right, Q fire, SPACE pause
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: good, although there's a lot of colour clash
Graphics: jerky animation, small sprites
Sound: good title tune, but bland effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: four
General rating: A big disappointment for fans of the arcade machine

Presentation	81%
Graphics	63%
Playability	57%
Addictive qualities	51%
Value for money	46%
Overall	50%

PETER SHILTON'S HANDBALL MARADONA

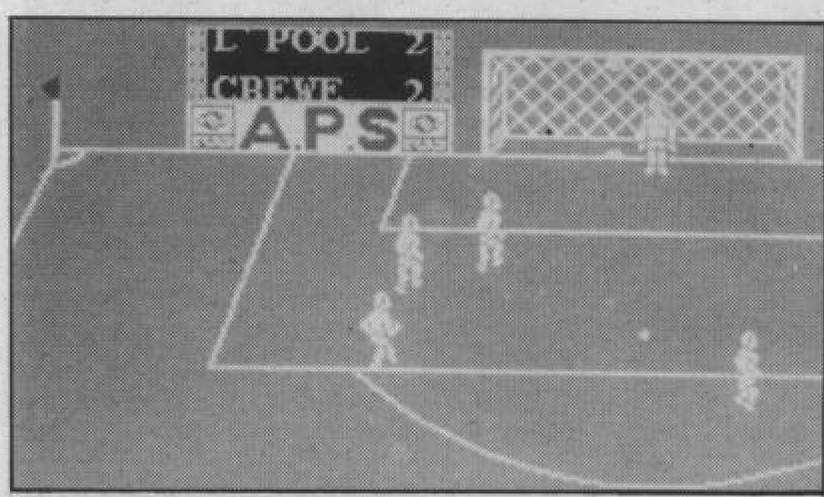
Producer: Grand Slam
Retail Price: **£6.95**
Author: **Icon Design**

During the World Cup finals, Diego Maradona allegedly used his hands when scoring a goal in a crucial match against England (an incident which resulted in England being knocked out of the Cup). **Icon Design** have written a slightly tongue-in-cheek program based on this memorable incident.

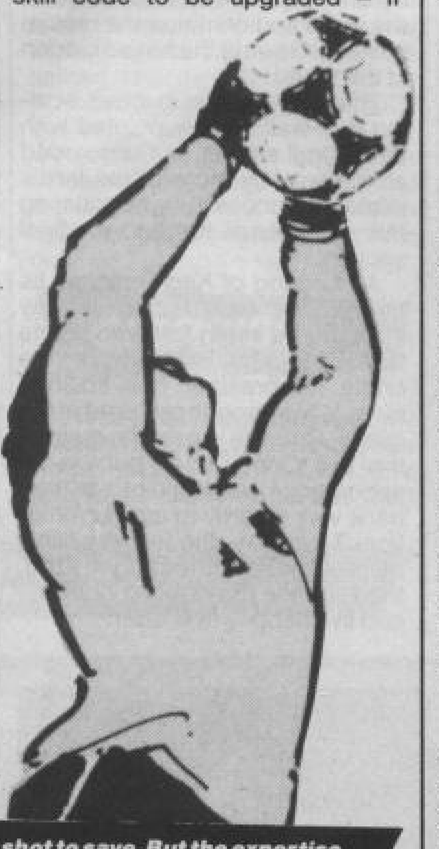
Peter Shilton's Handball Maradona puts the player in goal for a change. Playing for a team of your choice you must stop the opposition from scoring. The screen shows half of a football pitch looking towards the home team's goal. The opposing team position themselves and shoot from random angles. Using the joystick or keyboard, the player move the goalie so he saves the shot. If a shot is stopped from going into the net the scoreboard (to one side of the goal mouth) displays 'Save', otherwise it announces 'Goal'.

The goalkeeper has a variety of moves he can make in order to save shots. These include the standard left, right, up and down, as well as some more complicated manoeuvres, such as diving upwards, up left, up right, centre left, centre right, down right and down left. By using these moves to their full potential it is theoretically possible to save anything the opposition cares to kick at you.

The game provides 16 skill level and three modes of play. The practice session allows goalie-control to be perfected before the real hard work begins. In the basic game, which may be played against the computer or another human, each side gets four shots at goal, and your opponent's shooting prowess is related to the skill level he has attained. Your skill level is allocated by the computer according to a code, and entering the skill-building mode allows the skill code to be upgraded – if you're good enough. Four shots have to be saved before moving up a skill level, whereupon a new code is provided.



The goalie, Peter Shilton, is looking a bit perturbed as he faces the onslaught of four other players



Looks like it's going to be a tricky shot to save. But the expertise of Mr Shilton win the day – proving there are no handballs!



CRITICISM

● **" Goalkeeping simulations don't really rate that highly in my list of ideal computer games; there have been a few and none of them have made the grade. This continue that trend. The gameplay in** Handball Maradona **is non-existent. Graphically there isn't anything here which is remotely interesting – a horrid green pitch and some 'orrible white characters doing some kind of Irish jig (not a dig at Ciaran – honest). The sound is a complete cop out, with about three effects and no tune. I wouldn't buy this, I'd rather spend the money seeing Hereford United thrashing Ludlow Rangers! "**

BEN

● *" This game must have one of the tackiest titles ever. After all the game has nothing at all to do with the World Cup '86 – in fact the game has little to do with anything, least of all football!* Peter Shilton's Handball Maradona *is good if you like lots of flashy presentation and options, but there's no game to speak about. The graphics give a poor impression of perspective, so it is hard to judge when to attempt your save. As far as content goes, the game is little more than a repetition of the same old moves, over and over again. Graphics are the basic monochromatic type and the screen display is very sparse, containing just two ad boards. This is nothing like real goalkeeping, so it doesn't really achieve anything. "*

PAUL

● " To be honest there is not much to this game. Alright, there's a practice mode, and the skill development facility, but it's still the same boring game. Running around after a football never appealed to me at school, and I don't like watching football – except for World Cup games. *Peter Shilton's Handball Maradona* is very boring, holding interest for no more than a few minutes. The graphics are passable, but the men don't seem to follow any set patterns. It just doesn't appeal to me and it isn't a game I would recommend. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable – up, down, left, right, dive
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: unimaginative
Graphics: small and undetailed
Sound: a few spot effects; no tunes
Skill levels: 16
Screens: a few variations on the goalmouth
General rating: Part of what could be a good football game – as it is, there's not enough there

Presentation	75%
Graphics	54%
Playability	42%
Addictive qualities	40%
Value for money	43%
Overall	42%

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SUPER SOCCER

Producer: Imagine
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **D J Anderson**

Here's another way to play football without getting covered in mud and sweat. In fact you don't even have to leave the comfort of your armchair to enjoy a spot of soccer.

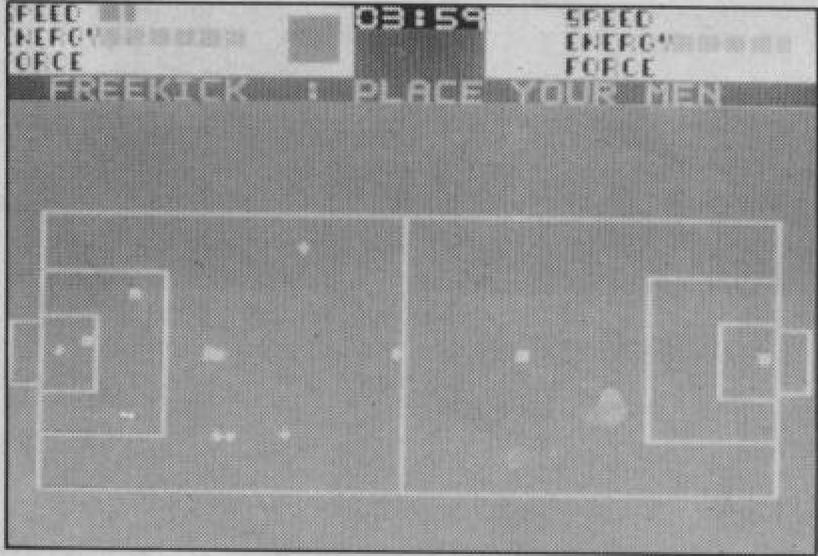
At the start the player has to select from a number of options presented in menu form. These comprise the numbers of players controlled in any one game, the skill level, the game mode (match or tournament) the duration of a match, team colours and team names. By pressing the appropriate key, these options can be selected and displayed on the screen.

Up to eight players can be controlled at once. There are three skill levels starting at quite simple and progressing to rather tricky. The number of people playing soccer partly determines the mode of the match – you can play a tournament or just have a single game. There is even a practice option so the player can perfect control of the team. Games can range from just ten minutes duration right up to half an hour.

The screen's starts off green, but if you find this a little rough on the eyes then the pitch colour can be changed at will, as can the colour of team strips to make sure the players show up properly on the screen in your new colourscheme.

The main screen shows the pitch which scrolls left and right with the action. At the top of the screen the speed, energy and force factors of the player you're currently controlling are shown. The player nearest the ball is the one you control and this is indicated by a halo appearing above his head. When free kicks or corners are to be taken the screen flips to an aerial view of the pitch and the players can be moved about using a cursor.

The footballers on screen are capable of performing a wide range of complicated manoeuvres accessed from keyboard or joystick, and effort spent mastering the controls will pay dividends once serious play begins. Like all serious footballers, you have to be in training!



The ref's awarded a free kick

CRITICISM

● " **Ho hum it looks like IMAGINE have tried to better** Match Day – **and in theory this is superior, but unfortunately in practice the game is slow and unresponsive. Controlling your player uses a set of joystick waggles or key presses that would be better suited to a fighting simulator, and the game kept me foxed for some time. Graphically** Super Soccer **is disappointing. The characters are nicely animated but there is so much colour clash that the effect is spoiled. The sound is on the whole quite good, with a lovely tune on the title screen, but the effects during the game are a bit lame. ".**

BEN

● " *I'm really disappointed with this. The ideas that are set out in the inlay fooled me into thinking it was going to be* Match Day *but with more moves. Unfortunately the author seems to have spent too much time concentrating on incorporating loads and loads of moves and features, but sadly he forgot a computer game also needs playability. If found it quite unplayable. I also found loads of bugs which wreck play completely. For instance when you get fouled, if you choose the fouled player to take the kick (a reasonable request, I thought), everything locks up completely as the player will not get up off the floor when told to. To my mind, this is too slow to be any fun to play. Not really* Super Soccer, ***more like Nearly Good Soccer.*** "

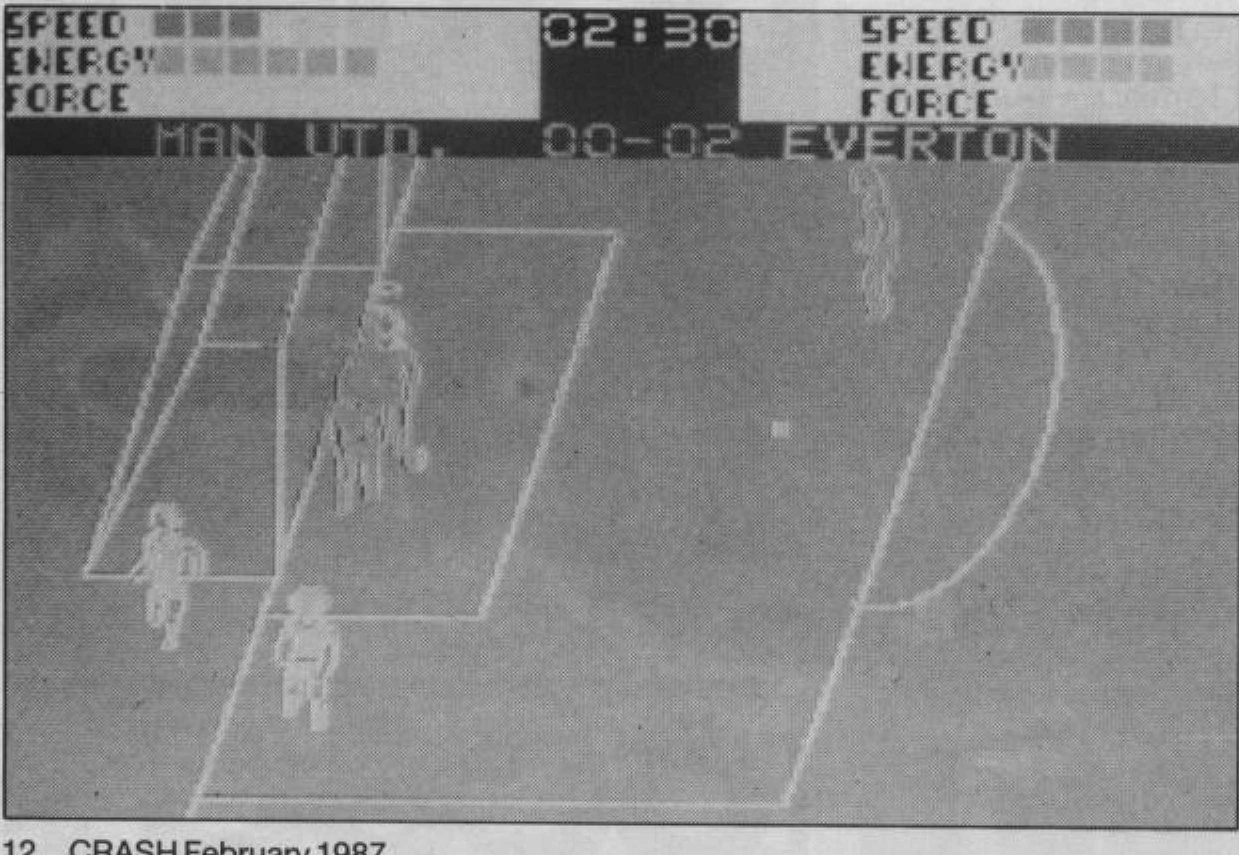
PAUL

● " Why has somebody reprogrammed *Match Day*, taken out the good bits, and replaced them with bits that don't work properly, and then called it *Super Soccer*? The graphics are dated, and the way the game is obviously supposed to fit together hasn't worked. The speed, energy and force bars contribute little, and the sound is fairly poor – there's nothing more than whistles during the game. A good long time on, and I don't think there are any notable improvements. Give me *Match Day*, any day. At least that was playable. "

MIKE



This is where the action is. Looks like another goal is on the way and Everton are already thrashing Manchester United



COMMENTS

Control keys: definable – up, down, left, right, kick
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: a little clash, but colour of pitch, strips and border definable
Graphics: poorly animated characters – tends to get messy
Sound: odd little tune and plenty of effects
Skill levels: three
Screens: scrolling pitch and place kick display
General rating: Potentially a good football simulator, but falls down owing to too many inconsistencies

Presentation	76%
Graphics	64%
Playability	55%
Addictive qualities	58%
Value for money	54%
Overall	**56%**



KONAMI'S GOLF

Producer: Imagine
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Choice**

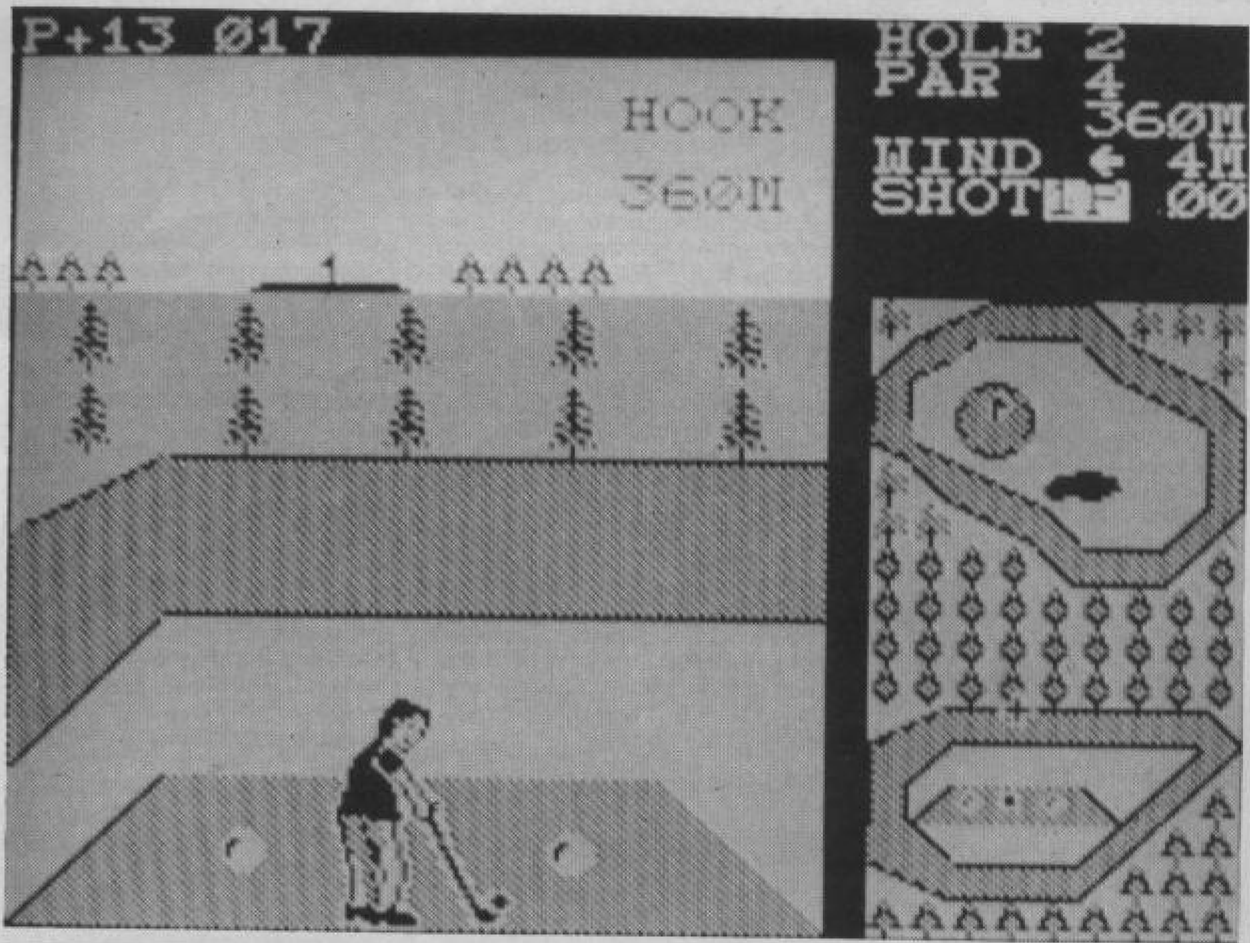
The sun has got his hat on, the birds are merrily flying around doing birdie type things and there's nothing like the taste of fresh air – so what is there left to do? Yes, that's right, ring your mates up 'cause the the scene is perfect for a lovely leisurely round of golf.

Konami's Golf, as the name suggests, is a golf simulation that can be played by one or two players, either in a stroke or matchplay game. The stroke game is probably preferable for newcomers, as the scoring system is based on the total number of shots taken to complete the nine-hole course, instead of the traditional par system of scoring. In the matchplay format each hole is contested separately, and the winner is the first player to win five holes.

The playing screen is split into three separate sections, the largest of which is used to give the golfer's view of the hole to be played. At the bottom right a birds-eye-view of the entire course is provided which also shows the flight of the ball after it has been struck. Above that, an information window gives an indication of the wind speed and direction, which hole you are attempting and its par, and the number of strokes already played.

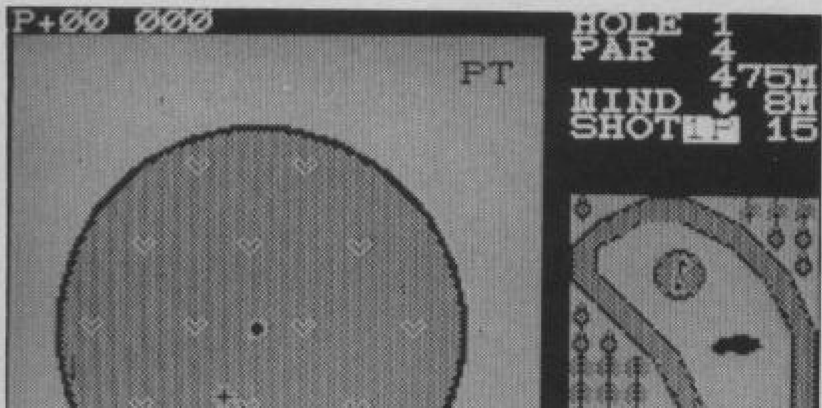
First things first: you must choose the appropriate club for the length of the stroke you intend to play. A guide to the different uses for the clubs available is given in the inlay – choose from a selection of 13. Once a club is firmly in your grip, you must then decide whether to hook, slice or simply thwack the ball straight down the middle. Hook makes it swing to the left and Slice to the right. Once all that has been sorted out it's time to decide the power of the shot.

A horizontal bar at the base of the screen contracts and expands. The strength of shot is proportional to the length of the bar when the fire button is pressed. Relax and watch the flight of the ball in the overhead window . . . until it's time to start the process all over again.



Teeing off at Hole Two – a par four, 360 yard tester

Eleven over par already, can Cam possibly drop it this time?



CRITICISM

● **"Aagh! Another golf simulation; I can't stand it. Nobody in their right mind should want to produce Golf as an arcade game – it's like doing a fishing game (Okay – I know one's been done, that was boring too), or going to the library to see if they've got the latest Mills 'n' Boon - totally pointless. IMAGINE's version of** Konami's Golf **is the most appealing golf game around on the Spectrum at the moment, but it still isn't worth more than three quid – and even at that price I wouldn't like it. Graphically it has to be said that this is quite good – a little green perhaps, but generally fairly well done."**

BEN

● *"Two golf games in one issue, at least one of them must be good – but alas no.* Konami's Golf *is certainly one of the most playable golf simulations around. It's very easy to get into. The graphics are well drawn, but in some places seem out of perspective. Sound is a bit scarce, but it doesn't matter in a game of this type.* Konami's Golf *contains stacks of little features that enhance it and make it much more than a 'hit and hope' program. One of the best golf simulations on the Spectrum."*

PAUL

● "Well, it's not all that bad. At first I was going to be really cruel to it, but, after a bit of perseverance it turned out to be almost enjoyable. The two-player mode is much more interesting, but boredom still sets in after a short while. The graphics aren't particularly good, and the whole thing seems to lack that certain something which would make it into a really fun game. If it was a cheapie, then maybe it'd be passable, but it's not, so it's not. Not incredibly amazing, but there ya go."

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, O left, P right, SPACE fire
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: black players on green field
Graphics: not very detailed – functional rather than decorative
Sound: a little tune at the start
Skill levels: one
Screens: one
General rating: Incorporates most of the features of the sport

Presentation	79%
Graphics	71%
Playability	59%
Addictive qualities	52%
Value for money	58%
Overall	**58%**

HIGHLANDER

Producer: Ocean
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Roy Gibson/ Canvas**

Highlander is based on one of last year's more unusual films. Immortals it seems aren't just the stuff of rumour or legend – they actually exist and roam through time in an endless battle with one another. Ultimately 'there can be only one'.

Highlander the game is based on just one element of the film – the sword fighting sequences. During these, the hero, McLeod, has to confront and kill three other immortals. The only possible method of executing an Eternal is to behead him, and this is McLeod's aim when he faces opponents. The immortal who finally triumphs becomes the holder of 'the knowledge', and consequently the saviour or destroyer of the world.

The game can be played in two ways: you can be McLeod who must fight against a series of increasingly competent competitors. Alternatively two players can fight each other in a head-to-head, one playing McLeod and the other taking on the character of one of his adversaries.

Each of the three levels is loaded separately and has a different setting and a different immortal for McLeod to try to decapitate. The first section features Ramirez, the least skilled of the immortals. Fizir is the second opponent – an ancient and skilled contender who is malicious and uncompromising in his fighting. If his head is removed then it's on to the final level which is set on rooftop in New York where McLeod faces the most deadly of all the immortals – the dreaded Kurgen. Kurgen is the most proficient swordsman of the everlasting fraternity, and killing him confers the 'knowledge' onto McLeod and the World is safe again. Failure however has disastrous consequences . . .

McLeod has fourteen different sword fighting moves at his disposal, accessed in traditional beat 'em up style. McLeod can move right or left across the screen and can attack or retreat, crouch down or leap into an attack position ready for the kill. Most of the fighting takes place with McLeod in a standing position. In this position McLeod has two defensive moves to protect his neck and body along with six attacking positions. In the kneeling position there are three attack modes allowing McLeod to defend his neck, head and feet.

Energy bars at the bottom of the screen indicate the status of the two combatants – fighting and taking hits costs energy while resting restores it slowly.



Fizir gets the better of you as you battle it out in the underground car-park

CRITICISM

● "Highlander **is yet another trite beat 'em up. This time your weapon is a sword so you can hack off the head of your opponent. The tie-in with the film (the head-hacking sword) is so vague that it may as well not exist. The game itself isn't really state-of-the-art. It is very easy to get bored with hack 'n slashing, simply because there isn't enough variation. Graphically I am disappointed; the characters are colourless, chunky and badly animated and the backgrounds are unvaried. The sound is less than good – there are no tunes and very few effects.** Highlander **is not a good game."**

BEN

● *"Highlander was one of my favourite films of the summer, so when* OCEAN *grabbed the rights to the computer version I was sure that they could make a great computer game out of it. To make the game like the film* OCEAN *should have gone towards an adventure/arcade scenario. As it is, I find it totally boring and quite unplayable. The graphics are very simple expanded sprites and the backgrounds contain a bit of colour. They don't look very impressive. Pity it's not as good as the film."*

PAUL

● "What FAT graphics! Not something we see that often on the Spectrum! That was the first thing that struck me, and the second thing was the fact that I found it very difficult to win a battle. No doubt I'll get better if I practise, but frankly, I can't be bothered. *Highlander* is more than a tiny bit boring; despite the fact that there is a reasonable variety of moves, not all of them seem to work properly. I can't understand why McLeod turns into a blob, liquidises, and throws his molten form at Ramirez. *Highlander* isn't one of the best games around. It doesn't appeal to me."

MIKE

The final scene, will McLeod decapitate Kurgen and earn 'the knowledge'?



COMMENTS

Control keys: Player One – W up, D right, X down, A left, S fire; Player Two – U up, M down, K right, H left, J fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: bleak; mainly black and white with a coloured border
Graphics: extended pixel graphics which look blocky and awkward
Sound: spot effects (but not many)
Skill levels: three
Screens: one main screen on each level
General rating: A disappointing game that bears little relevance to the film

Presentation	75%
Graphics	62%
Playability	53%
Addictive qualities	54%
Value for money	53%
Overall	57%

IMPOSSABALL

Producer: Hewson
Retail Price: **£8.95**
Author: **John Phillips**

Ball games were very popular during 1986. HEWSON kick off the New Year with a game of this type, written by a newcomer to the Spectrum programming scene. This latest spherical scenario *Impossaball*, features a ball travelling through a 3D scrolling environment.

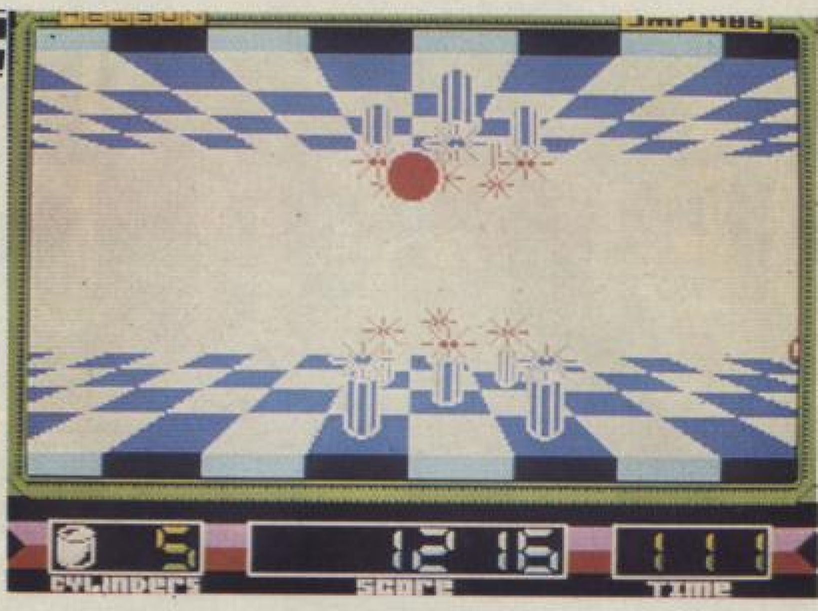
This particular bouncing ball has to be negotiated down eight corridors, which become progressively more cluttered with obstacles. Cylinders protrude from the floor and ceiling and must be knocked level with the surface by bouncing onto them. The game is played against the clock, and the status area keeps track of the number of cylinders remaining, the amount of time left to complete the current level and the score so far.

Left to its own devices, the ball bounces up and down on the spot – pressing fire increases the height of the bounce up through the four levels available, while releasing fire allows the bouncing to subside. A shadow under the ball helps you judge its position in the corridor and the height of the bounce when manoeuvring. Bouncing the ball into stationary objects causes it to rebound – unless you choose a deadly artefact, in which case one of the four lives available is lost and the ball returns to the start of the current corridor. After an untimely death, cylinders that have been dealt with don't have to be tackled again – play resumes with the objects in the corridor remaining as they were when your ball burst.

Life as a cylinder-bashing ball is complicated by deadly spikes and murderous plasma fields. Spikes tend to live on the top of poles – bouncing into a pole has no harmful side-effects, but the spiky orbs themselves are definitely dangerous. Plasma fields can be stationary or may move around, following preset patrol patterns. Fire bolts appear after the first level, leaping into the air at regular intervals from either the ceiling or the floor.

On the plus side, magic rings appear on the floor and ceiling. Bouncing into one while it is flashing earns some extra time on the current corridor, but once the magic power has been extracted the ring joins the spikes and plasma, becoming deadly to the touch.

Points are scored for cylinders that have been destroyed and for travelling down the length of a corridor: an extra life is awarded for every 5,000 points collected. When all the cylinders on a level have been destroyed it is possible to cross the finish line – you then automatically flip up to the next level where the going gets even tougher. It looks like 1987 is going to be a busy year for spherical heroes . . .



Disaster strikes on level two: Pop goes the ball as it makes contact with the spiky guardians that surround an encampment of cylinders

CRITICISM

"'Oh no!' I hear you cry 'Not another bouncy ball game'. Don't fret – this is different. It really does appeal to me – there isn't a scenario, but who cares? This is compelling enough without any plot. Graphically Impossaball **is very original. The playing area is superbly drawn, the scrolling is excellent and there is no colour clash. The sound is also very good, with a multitude of effects – and the tune on the title screen is worth listening to (which is more than can be said for most title tunes). Another ace from HEWSON. "**

BEN

" HEWSON have always come up with original and good games (with the exception of City Slicker*) –* Impossaball *is the icing on the cake. Graphically, I would say that this is one of their most inviting products. The colour is cleverly used and avoids attribute problems. Unfortunately the sound is limited, but it serves its purpose.* Impossaball *is very easy to get into, and extremely playable. As with most* HEWSON *games, it is very addictive and good fun to play.* HEWSON *have done it again. You'll be playing this one for months. "*

PAUL

" I must confess that this one didn't really grab me, but the smooth, interesting graphics convinced me that it was worth playing a little bit. Indeed it was! Despite the slight boredom of the first few games, *Impossaball* really kept me at it for a long while. There is more to this than simple arcade reactions (though these are a major part of the gameplay), a bit of brain-power is also called for. The combination of these two elements makes the game highly addictive and well worth getting. Recommended. "

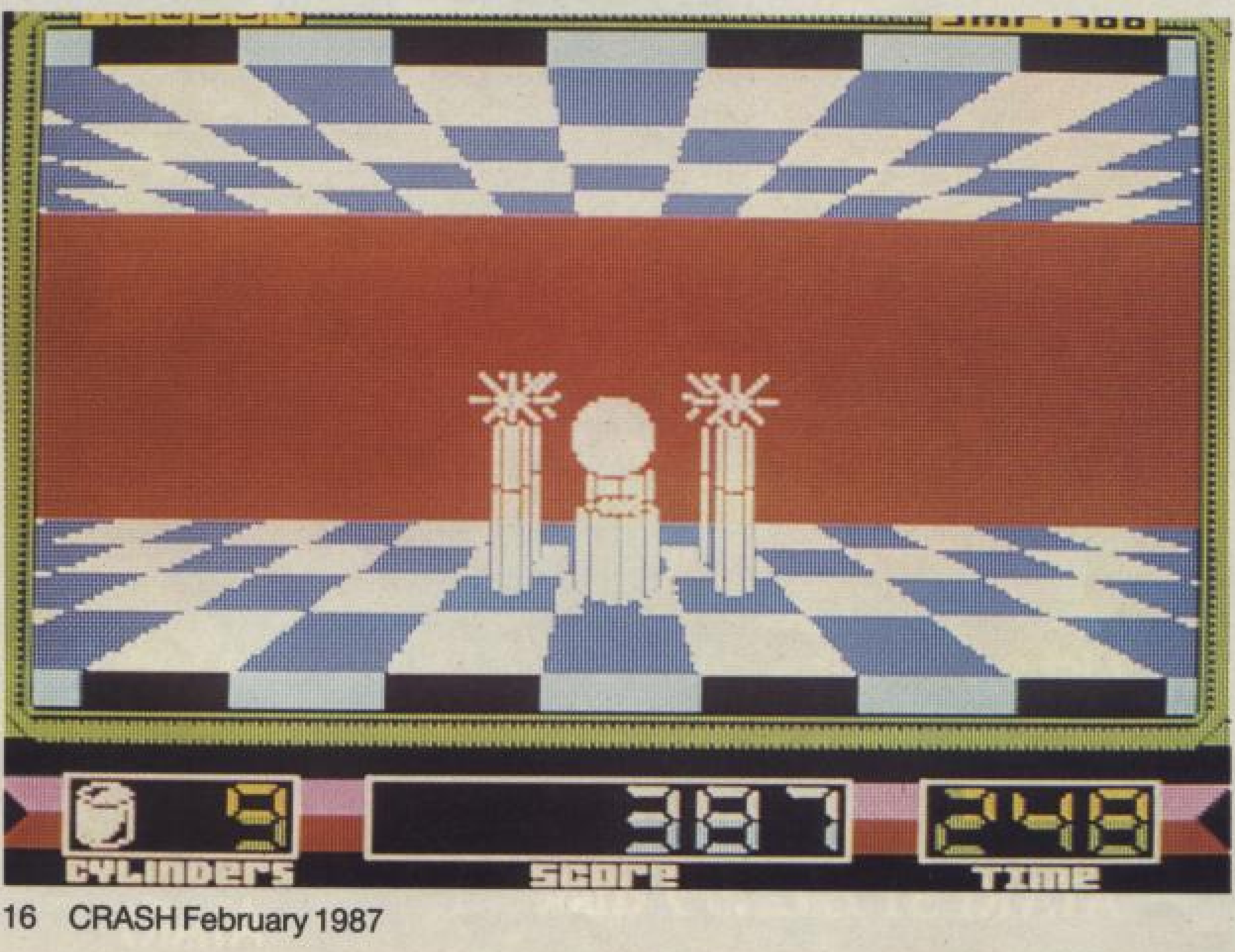
MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: Left/Right-handed options – Q/O left, W/P right, P/Q 'into' screen, L/S 'out of' screen, X/M fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: effective
Graphics: smooth scrolling and animation; neat inertia effect after collisions
Sound: good title tune and tidy effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: eight scrolling levels
General rating: An original, addictive game that is more than just another bouncy-ball program

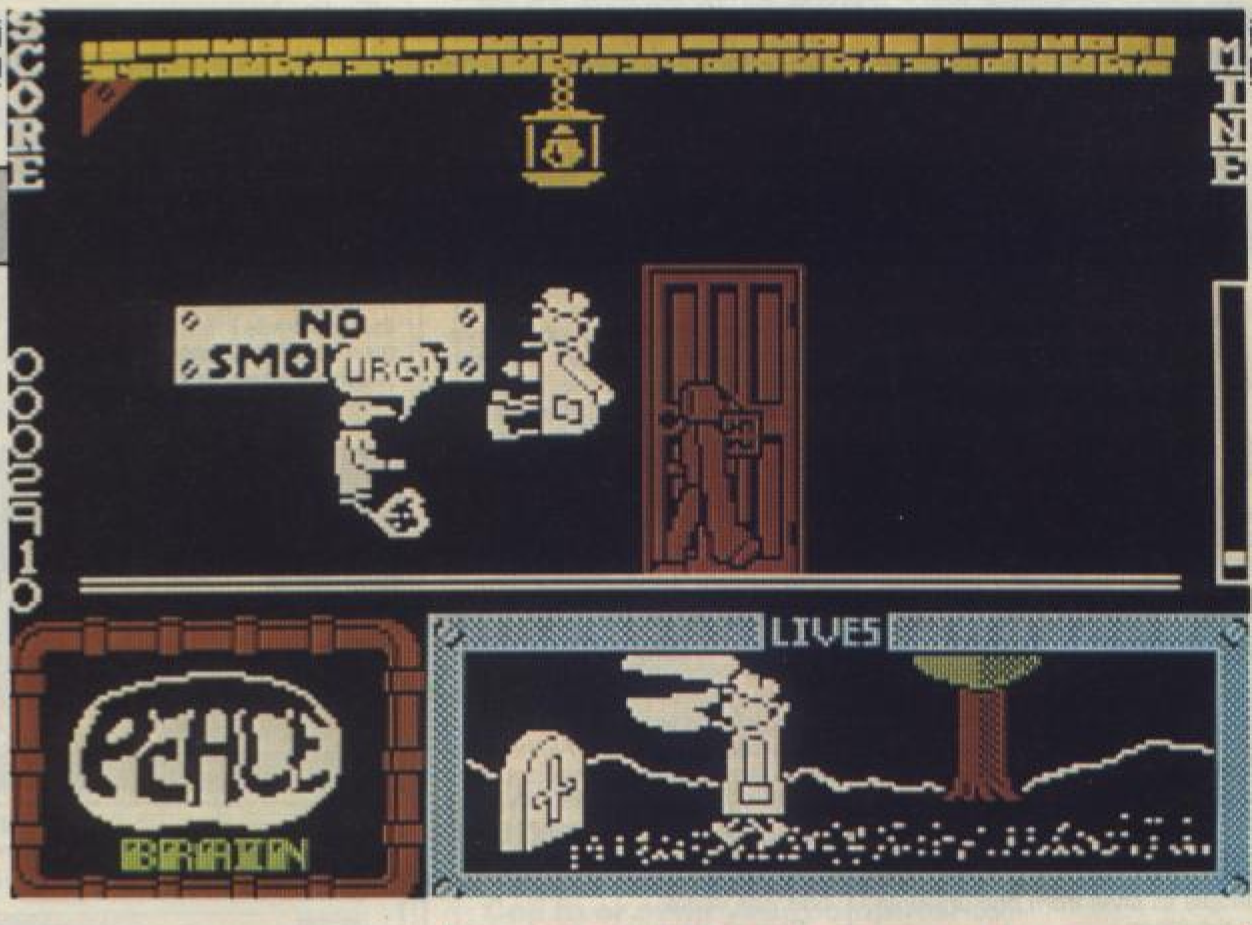
Presentation	89%
Graphics	90%
Playability	90%
Addictive qualities	89%
Value for money	88%
Overall	89%

Nine cylinders remain to be dealt with on the first level, as the spherical hero despatches another spike-guarded protuberance. Could this game have been partly inspired by the Spiky-haired Ones on ZZAP! . . .



AGENT X

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Steven Tatlock**

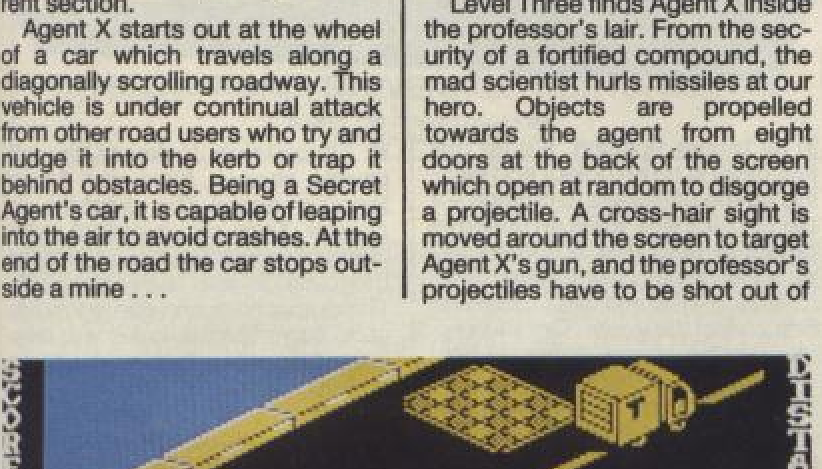


Blatantly ignoring the No Smoking signs, Agent X executes a flying kick that disposes of one of the professor's strange robotic guardians

A mad professor has run off with the President of the United States, planning to brainwash him and start World War Three. Agent X, being the best available, has been selected by the World Powers to make a rescue attempt.

The four stages to the mission are loaded separately from the B side of the cassette. A window below the main playing area shows the trenchcoated figure of Agent X on a path that leads to a tombstone. Each time a mistake is made the figure takes another step towards the grave, but Agent X gains a little bit of life force when a new stage of the game begins. A vertical bar on the right-hand side of the screen indicates how close our hero is to completing the current section.

Agent X starts out at the wheel of a car which travels along a diagonally scrolling roadway. This vehicle is under continual attack from other road users who try and nudge it into the kerb or trap it behind obstacles. Being a Secret Agent's car, it is capable of leaping into the air to avoid crashes. At the end of the road the car stops outside a mine . . .



Agent X zooms along the road – that chequered patch up ahead is deadly

In the mine, Agent X is seen for the first time in all his glory, complete with trench coat, drooping fag and pork pie hat. He's on foot and makes his way along a horizontally scrolling tunnel, jumping over runaway trolleys that trundle along the floor. The professor's evil minions approach from the left and right and must be kicked or punched out of the way – if they get their blow in first, Agent X is sent flying off the screen and the little figure gets a bit closer to that tombstone.

Level Three finds Agent X inside the professor's lair. From the security of a fortified compound, the mad scientist hurls missiles at our hero. Objects are propelled towards the agent from eight doors at the back of the screen which open at random to disgorge a projectile. A cross-hair sight is moved around the screen to target Agent X's gun, and the professor's projectiles have to be shot out of the air. When the bad boffin's stock of missiles is exhausted, you get a shot at the evil kidnapper before moving on to the final level.

To conclude the mission Agent X has to fly a helicopter through a cave system avoiding missiles and crusher bars that move, pincer-like, from floor and ceiling. The cave opens onto the sea, where the professor has constructed a series of platforms from which his henchmen launch themselves using jetpacks. They do their best to blow our hero from the sky. At the end of the scrolling sea there is a platform which contains a bomb. Agent X must collect the bomb, fly back through the cave network, deposit the device on the roof of the professor's HQ, and then fly back out to sea to avoid the blast.

CRITICISM

● **" Perhaps this isn't one of the most original budget games ever, but it is certainly one of the best. I'm impressed with this: it has everything a game should have – my only moans are that it may be a bit easy to complete and that the multi-load is a real pain. The graphics are a bit of a mixed bag really: the first few sections are excellent, but after these the graphics start to get a bit iffy. The sound is the best feature. The title music is without doubt amongst the best 48K music around. The effects aren't bad either. For two quid you won't regret buying this at all. "**

BEN

● *" It seems to me that* MASTERTRONIC *have now established themselves as one of the top software houses in the country. They continually come out with well polished products at an affordable price. Agent X is another bit of fun software: its presentation is great and the game is playable and addictive. The graphics are some of the best budget type around and contain a good mixture of colour. Agent X is not initially addictive, but after a while I found myself rewinding the tape without complaining at the multi-load. Even if it is fairly easy to get past the first two levels, the game is fun to play and is great value for money. Well worth buying, if only because it's a bit different from the norm. "*

PAUL

● " Wow! For £1.99, this has got so much content. The graphics are all fairly neat, but I dislike the need to continually restart and reload. I suppose it's unavoidable, but it is a little bit more frustrating to die on a multi-load game than on a normal one. For the money, *Agent X* is a crucial purchase, because without it you miss all the fun! Loads of content, in some very different games, all of them very well done. Worth every penny. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, O left, P right, M fire
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: a bit restrained
Graphics: good detail and animation
Sound: amazing music at the start, okay effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: three scrolling play areas and the shoot out screen
General rating: A great piece of budget software

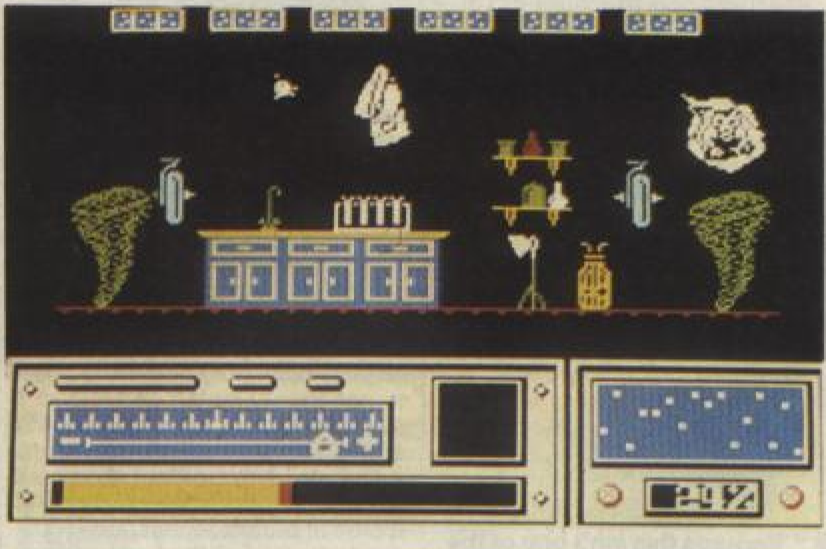
Presentation	92%
Graphics	82%
Playability	83%
Addictive qualities	81%
Value for money	94%
Overall	85%

DOUBLE TAKE

Producer: Ocean
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Denton Designs**

Our normal, stable universe has a parallel – a universe that is under the control of a distinctly evil being by the name of Sumink. Sumink has been waiting for the opportunity to cross the dimensional divide that separates the two universes so he can begin a new program of conquest . . .

Then, one day, a student working in an advanced physics research laboratory unwittingly provides Sumink with his chance. An experiment damages the entire space/time continuum, throwing the two parallel universes into an unstable state and creating gateways that allow objects and people to pass from one universe to the other.



In the kitchen in our own universe – a fiendish monster is just materialising above the right-hand vortex

The lab in which the fateful experiment was conducted contains sixteen rooms and a giant, tunnel-like particle accelerator. Suddenly it has become linked to the equivalent laboratory in Sumink's universe. Objects from locations in our universe have become unstable and changed places with their counterparts in the 'anti-universe'. The first step in restoring order involves stabilising these objects and returning them to their rightful locations.

You control the student whose experiment caused all the problems – he is represented by a flying lab coat and is equipped with a gun. Just as well, as a horde of energy-sapping monsters have been created and they lurk in every location, regenerating themselves endlessly until stability is restored.

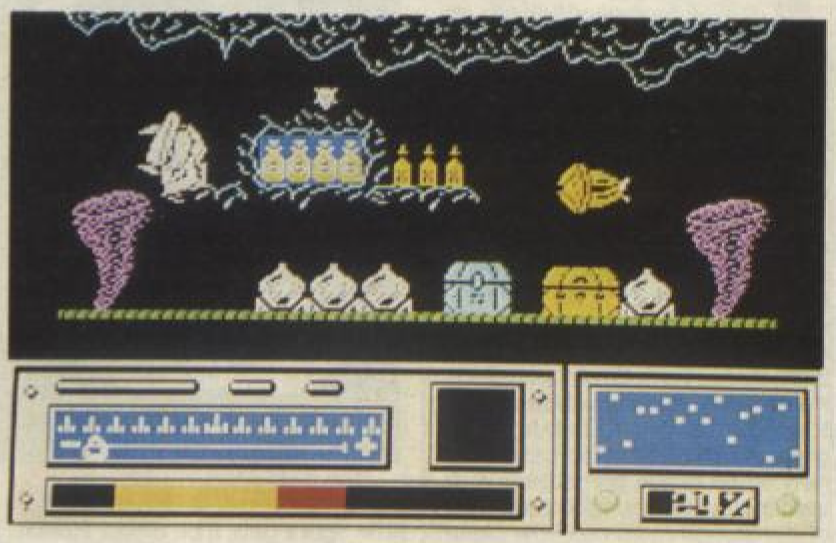
Rooms in a universe are linked by whirling vortexes – the screen flips to the next location when the coat is moved down into a vortex while fire is pressed. To gain access to some rooms, the student has to travel through the cyclotron itself – which contains energy-sapping atomic particles. The status panel includes a readout that monitors your energy level: there's only one life in the game and energy must be conserved as it can't be boosted.

Periodically, the main display dissolves and reforms as the two universes interchange. A pointer indicates which universe is currently occupied – a plus sign represents our universe and a minus sign Sumink's. This pointer slides along a scale when a shift between universes is imminent. All the locations in one universe are contained in the other, but as the universes are mirror images of each other, moving left in one universe is equivalent to moving right in the other, and vice versa.

Sixteen electrons – one for each of the sixteen pairs of locations – move up and down in a window in the status area. Restoring order by returning all the objects that travelled between the universes to their correct places causes the dancing electrons to move in harmony and produce a sine wave on this readout.

When the student enters a room a pair of lights under the electron display show red if the room is unstable and green if it is stable. One item can be carried at a time, and picking up an object causes it to appear in a window on the status area. The indicator lights then remain red until the student takes the object to the room in which it belongs. If the lights turn red again when the object is dropped, it has been placed incorrectly and must be gathered up and repositioned.

The colour of the object held changes to indicate its stability, moving through the spectrum from magenta to flashing white. Stability can be increased gradually by shooting monsters or instantly by touching the sparkling cloud that wanders through each universe – these clouds also act as portals between the two worlds. A stable object is retained when the universes interchange, but the moment it is dropped it becomes unstable again unless it is placed in its proper position. It's no use just picking up an object and waiting for the universes to change – if the flip happens while an unstable object is held it is automatically swapped for its counterpart.



A dank and dreary location in Sumink's universe

Restoring stability is only the first part of the game. Once everything is ship-shape it's time to deal with the threat posed by Sumink himself. Entering the negative universe you must do battle with the evil warlord . . .

CRITICISM

● **"I was impressed when I first saw this – it is based on a really good idea. However, after quite a lot of play I realised that** Double Take **didn't really grab me in the right places. The gameplay isn't really compulsive, so you can find yourself getting very bored after a short time. On screen everything is excellently done. All of the characters are perfectly animated (especially your jacket), and the backdrops are colourful and very detailed. The sound is also good, but not outstanding. This game isn't quite my cup of tea – I found it got monotonous."**

BEN

● "DENTON DESIGNS *seem to have got their act together again and up come up with a really good product . . . I think! The graphics are well above average – colourful and detailed. The sound is good but only plays once on the title screen, which you never see again after you've chosen your options. The animation is very smooth and fast, and thankfully the collision detection is accurate. Unfortunately, I found the game lacked the sparkle that could keep me addicted to it for long. I can see that* Double Take *will appeal to the graphically-minded among you, but I found the actual game boring to play.* "

PAUL

● "It certainly looks as though DENTON DESIGNS have got things together again! The graphics on *Double Take* are excellent, with loads of colour used (and most of the clashes are fairly discreet!). The instructions and gameplay are quite complicated, but if you take time to digest everything the game underneath is both playable and addictive. The place where *Double Take* most surprised me was in the effects. Congratulations to DENTON's for the spinning vortexes, the screen changing, and the everso neat animation."

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable – up, down, left, right, fire; SPACE to pause
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: attractive, and carefully done
Graphics: impressive: the usual DENTON's flair
Sound: cute tune at the beginning with spot effects throughout
Skill levels: one
Screens: around sixty
General rating: A very classy and original game that looks good but could get a bit monotonous after a while

Presentation	83%
Graphics	90%
Playability	71%
Addictive qualities	69%
Value for money	72%
Overall	74%



HARVEY HEADBANGER

Producer: Firebird
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Conversion by Probe Software**

Harvey and his drinking partner Hamish Highball like nothing better than to slope off early from work to catch the Happy Hour in their local bar. After a few beers they start to become rather violent, and start scrapping – their favourite occupation. Being a bit short on brains, they use their beer bellies and tough heads to beat the living daylights out of each other.

The basic idea of this game is to out-manoeuvre your opponent or the computer. The screen is divided into horizontal sections, divided by wires which the characters move along by swinging with their arms. Harvey and his chum can move vertically, by leaping from wire to wire. As they move over the background it changes shade, and the two combatants try to turn as much of the screen to their own colour as possible. The idea is to isolate your opponent inside a zone of your own colour.

There is a squiggly straws at each side of the screen, one for Harvey and one for Hamish. Cocktail appear in the playing area, and the more drinks a rotund fighter slurps, the higher the liquid level in his straw rises.

When Harvey and Hamish collide, they are both stunned for a while by the impact, and start to move around the screen erratically, out of control. The more booze you have in your straw, the quicker you recover from this dazed state and if the other boozer is still helpless it's possible to hem in in with your colour and win.

There are five levels of difficulty, and the start level is selected before play begins.

CRITICISM

● **"I'd go as far as saying that this is the most playable budget game I have seen to date. The gameplay is fast and frustrating. It does lack a little something graphically, but it's hard to say what. The sound is a bit lame – but there are a few tune-ettes and minimal effects. I'd say that this is well worth the couple of quid FIREBIRD are asking. Go out and buy it – NOW!"**

BEN

● *"What a weird old game this is. It took a bit of getting used to, but I began to enjoy it when I'd finally discovered what it was all about.* Harvey Headbanger *is not as playable as it should be, but with two players careering out of control it can become fun. The presentation is quite original, with lots of cutely presented instructions and menus. It would have been even better with a friendly little tune and a well drawn title screen – but for two pounds one can't complain, can one?"*

PAUL

● "I'd heard the Amstrad version had received acclaim, but from the brief and very unatmospheric instructions (typical of FIREBIRD!), I must confess I didn't really expect any great things from its Spectrum counterpart. Nothing great was revealed to me on my first single-player game, but everything became clear after having played two-player. The pace isn't over fast, but it becomes very frantic as your opponent comes close to hemming you in. A very simple idea on the part of FIREBIRD, but well worth the two quid."

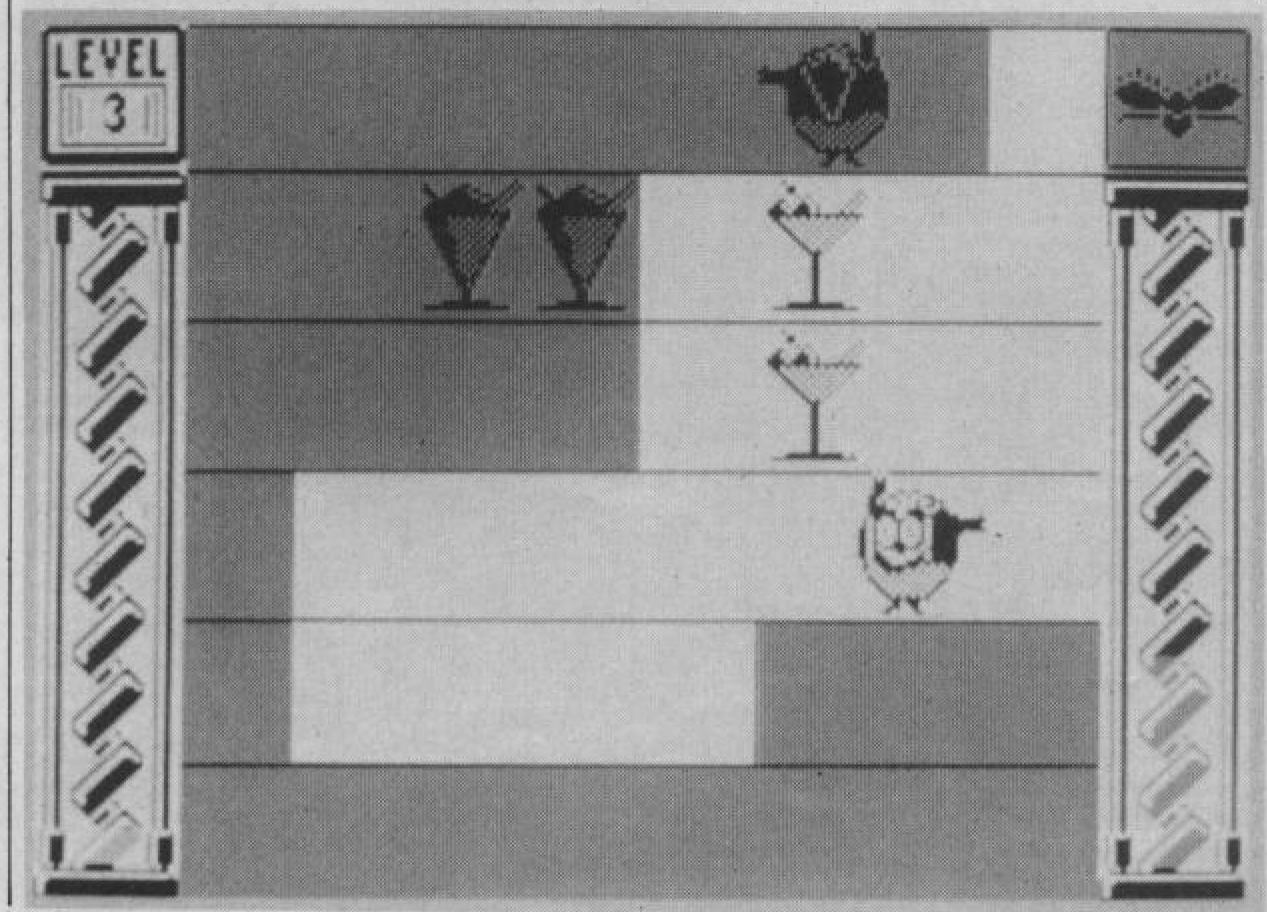
MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable – up, down, left, right
Joystick: Kempston
Use of colour: adds greatly to the playability
Graphics: good animation
Sound: spot effects
Skill levels: five
Screens: one
General rating: A fun, original game

Presentation	**74%**
Graphics	**79%**
Playability	**81%**
Addictive qualities	**84%**
Value for money	**88%**
Overall	**80%**

Frantic guzzling action as a couple of refreshing drinks appear for the two challengers



NINJA

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Icon Design**

Ninjas aren't the sort of guys you want to bump into down a dark alleyway. Not only do they possess a rather nasty sword, they always keep a plentiful supply of Ninja stars about them, and if all that lot doesn't get you, well, a swift kick or punch should see you coughing up the ol' expensive bridgework. Fortunately, the hero of this game, the Ninja, is the worst of the lot. Going in and sorting out a multi-level temple positively bursting at the seams with various aggressive types is the ideal way for him to spend a rather dull Sunday afternoon.

The justification for this breach of the peace, just in case Ninja needs one, is that a low-down no-good bunch of baddies has made off with a collection of idols from the temple which Ninja supports. He sets out to rescue the idols from the clutches of the blasphemers.

Several flip-screen rooms make up a single storey of the temple and the hero has to kill off at least one idol-thief in each chamber. Only one baddie confronts him on the screens that make up the first level, but on the higher levels, up to three may come at him at once. Moving up a level causes the bad guys on the level vacated to regenerate.

Ninja has but one life but can replenish his energy reserves by collecting idols. Five hits kill him, but he's some mean Ninja and has a full range of kicks and punches, a supply of throwing stars and that trusty blade.

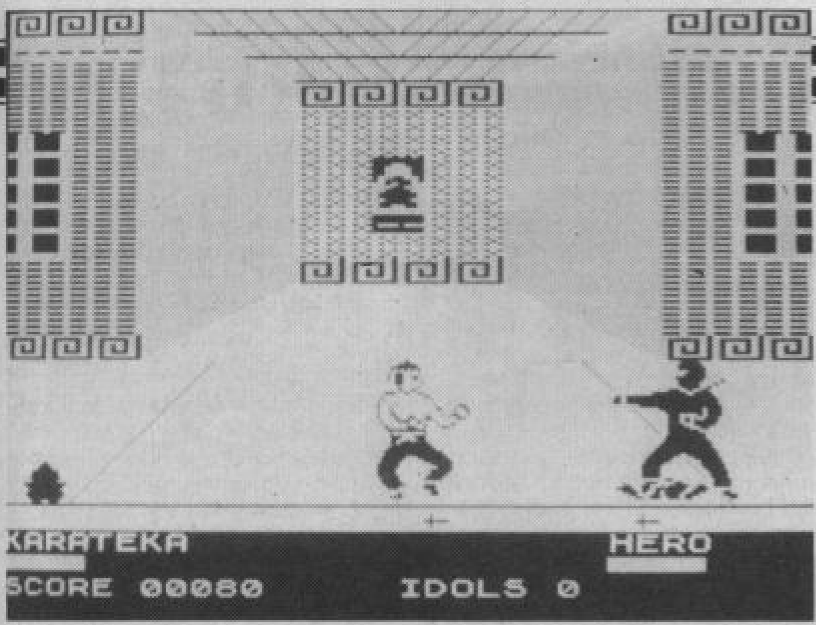
The opposition includes Ninjas, Thugs and Karatekas. The yobs take a different number of blows to dispose of, and fight in different ways: Thugs wade straight in as soon as Ninja moves towards them; Karatekas are fairly aggressive, but the Bad Ninjas like to hang back throwing Ninja stars.

After a Ninja star has been thrown, it lies at the bottom of the screen so a Bad Ninja or our hero can collect it – the hero can carry three stars at once.

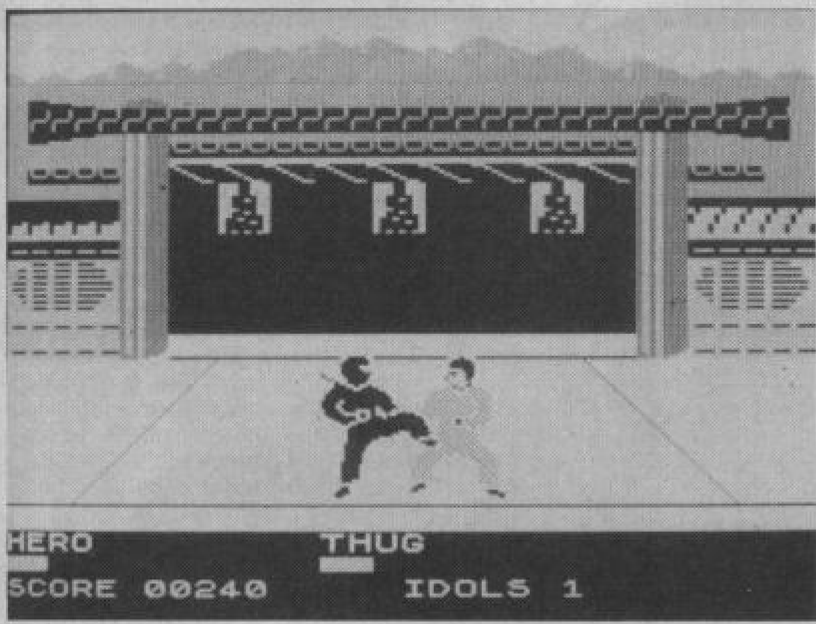
Points are scored for salvaging Idols and for eliminating baddies. To win the game, the seven idols have to be collected before Ninja fights his way back down to Level One.

CRITICISM

● **"Ninja is the sort of game that would have been exceedingly playable if only the programmers had spent a little more time on it. The idea is there and is very good, but unfortunately the game gives an overall impression of being unfinished. The**



Early in the game, Ninja confronts an idol-napping Karateka



With a few more points in the bag, our hero puts the boot into a thug

gameplay isn't that impressive: I couldn't play more than a few goes without becoming completely bored. Beating up thugs is only fun when they fight back intelligently. The graphics are poor. The characters flicker around erratically and the backgrounds are boring. The sound is also below average – there are no tunes and the effects leave a lot to be desired. All in all, even with the low price, I wouldn't recommend this. It just isn't fun to play. "

BEN

● *" What a boring game this is. There is very little in* Ninja *that would keep anybody excited for long. It needs very little thought to play the game –* Ninja *is just a case of trudging around bashing up pixels. The graphics are particularly basic and monochromatic. The backgrounds contain lots of colour but give a poor illusion of depth. Sound consists of basic 'white noise' effects and no tune. I didn't find* Ninja *in the slightest bit addictive. The package contains a nice loading screen and many options, but unfortunately little game. "*

PAUL

● " *Ninja* is a bad game. The graphics are very poor; similar characters may have been passable on *Fist*, years ago, but not now: the programmer couldn't be bothered to animate them properly? No brain is required, beyond the ability to move and fire, but I wouldn't complain about that if there was more content in it. There isn't though, so I'll just say don't buy it, even for £1.99.

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable – up, down, left, right, punch
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: colourful, but simplistic
Graphics: simple, basic stuff
Sound: minimal effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: 15
General rating: A very average budget beat 'em up

Presentation	60%
Graphics	50%
Playability	47%
Addictive qualities	45%
Value for money	51%
Overall	**50%**

PRO GOLF

Producer: Atlantis
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **John Watson**

Budget golfing is now available on the Spectrum from ATLANTIS who have taken a different overall approach, offering an overhead view of the playing area.

Before a player may progress onto the green several selections must be made. *Pro Golf* allows three different types of match play: championship round, single round or practice, and up to four players may approach the links together. Having selected the standard of play the next decision is between using a championship tee or a Metal tee, which governs the length of the drives you attempt. The course itself is either Sunningdale or Pebble beach, depending on which side of the cassette is loaded.

Golf is played out in the open, and to add realism *Pro Golf* allows the effects of the elements on your game to be modified. The speed and direction of the wind may be selected and it can range from gusty to a steady gale. The ground can be wet, normal or dry. After the variables have all been adjusted, it's time to pull on the Pringle jumper and head off on to the course itself.

The main part of the screen is taken up with an overhead view of the links and all the normal hazards are present: trees, the rough, and treacherous bunkers. Windows placed over the course contain a graphic representation of the golfer you control, indicate the wind speed and the direction of the hole and show the par for the current hole and how far your ball has to travel before making contact with the flag.

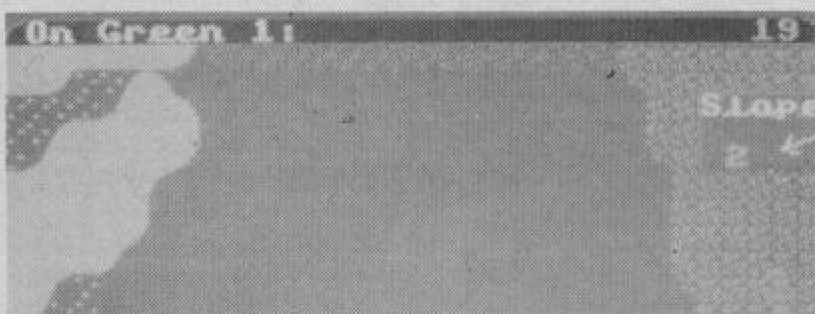
Before the ball is sent whizzing across to the green a shot must be set up. First choose a club: woods from 1 to 4 are available and irons from 1 to 9 are included in your bag along with a sand iron for those embarrassing bunker problems. After the appropriate club has been chosen, the direction of the shot must be selected, taking into consideration the effects of the wind. Moving a pointer that appears on a small compass at the bottom of the screen alters the orientation of your golfer.

Finally, the power of the shot needs to be adjusted on a scale of zero to one hundred.

The ball is hit by referring to the window that shows the player – time the shot so the ball is hit as the golfer's arms swing around. When the ball is on the green, the screen fills with an enlarged version of the putting green. The same set-up routine is used for putting, but the power of shots becomes more critical.

CRITICISM

● **" Pro Golf is perhaps the most unappealing game that I've played this month. How can anyone expect a game based on a relatively unpopular sport**



(among young people anyway) that is programmed badly to make a profit? I've always found Golf simulations dull and this is no exception. Graphically Pro Golf **is poor, the courses are badly drawn with UDGs and your player looks as though he's been put through a blender. Colour is used badly, Okay so golf courses are green, but one can only take so much Spectrum green on screen before it all gets too much. The sound is dire. I'd keep well away from this if I was you, there are a lot of better things to do with your money. "**

BEN

● *" I've had a few bad experiences with golf simulations – although if pushed I can get quite interested in the game. Unfortunately* Pro Golf *is about what I'd expect from a budget priced game. This is very much based on all the other golf simulations that have come out for the Spectrum – after all there's not much that you can really do with the game. The graphics are as detailed as necessary and flick onto the screen quickly – but where the program loses speed (it's all BASIC) is the calculating of the other player's score.* Pro Golf *is fairly good, as far as golf simulations go. At the budget price it is as good as can expected – but then golf games never did arouse me. "*

PAUL

● " Yawwwwn! The only reason that I might have loaded up this game expectantly would be if I placed my faith in the taste of Mr Headroom. If this is the sort of thing he's into, then maybe that explains his stuttering; he's so near to sleep that he can't control it. Forgetting Max for a moment, *Pro Golf* is Boring with a capital B. Presumably real golf bears no similarity to this at all, otherwise it'd have no fans! The business of hitting SPACE when the club gets vertical is unrealistic, difficult and frustrating, just like *Olympiad '86*. *Pro Golf* is the sort of game I don't like playing. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: O left, P right, ENTER select, SPACE hit ball
Joystick: n/a
Use of colour: lots of colour but rather unimaginatively used
Graphics: poor UDG characters
Sound: spot effects plus a tune
Skill levels: one
Screens: 36
General rating: Probably not very entertaining, even if you like golf simulations . . .

Presentation	29%
Graphics	35%
Playability	24%
Addictive qualities	21%
Value for money	32%
Overall	26%

SURVIVORS

Producer: Atlantis
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Glynn Carey**

The setting is a damaged anti-radiation bunker, crowded with survivors of a future nuclear war. Unfortunately these survivors are now trapped by fallen debris and rubble. Aided by three specialist rescue droids, your mission is to get them out, tunnelling through rockfalls by shifting boulders *Boulderdash*-style.

Droid Number One is used for tunnelling, Number Two automatically teleports survivors to safety, and Number Three can be used to clear obstructions. Control can be changed from one droid to another at by pressing the corresponding number key.

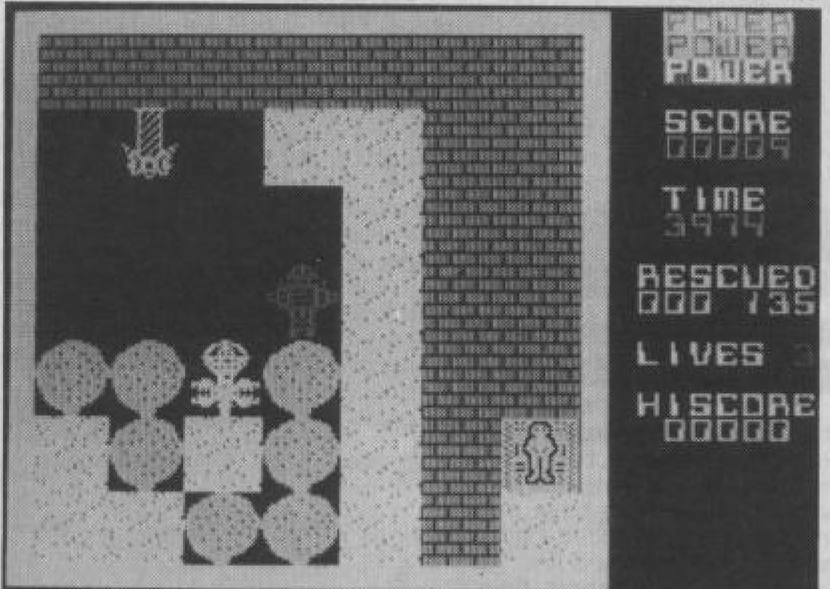
Owing to the high radiation levels, the once harmless MK1 bunker maintenance droids have become vicious killers. They have to be avoided at all costs, as contact results in a massive energy loss for your droids – he mutant droids must be crushed or trapped if your mission is to continue.

There could be up to a thousand survivors trapped in the seven-level bunker and time is at a premium. All the survivors on a level have to be rescued before you can continue, and the status area shows how many humans have been rescued and how many remain to be found on the current level.

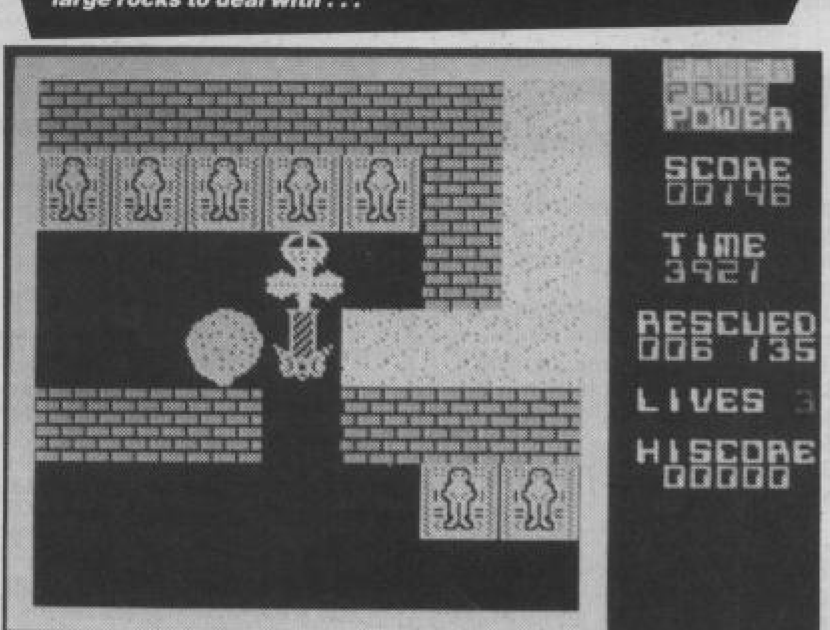
CRITICISM

● **"Remember** Thunderbirds**? Then imagine it mixed with a fair splash of** Boulderdash **and you've got** Survivors**. Graphically this is about average: the backgrounds are drab and the characters lack detail. The sound is also a bit on the lame side and there are no tunes and very few effects. On the whole I'd only recommend this to puzzle freaks, as it won't appeal for long if you can't play it successfully."**

BEN



You start out with all three droids together and some rather large rocks to deal with . . .



Six humans rescued (and only 135 to go on the current level). The clock is ticks away

● *"I just can't believe how good this game is! At first I thought it was just an average copy of* Boulderdash *with a magnify routine – but* Survivors *is more in the style of* Thunderbirds *– requiring a lot of thought and planning. The lack of a joystick option makes little difference, as the keyboard control is very responsive. The graphics are a decent size, and the comparatively small play area continually springs surprises on you. It's excellent value for money. I just hope that* ATLANTIS *can keep it up."*

PAUL

● "What's this? Is it a playable game? Yes! There is a very prominent sense of *Rockford's Riot* and *Boulderdash* in this, with all the jerky scrolling, poor characters, falling rocks and tunnelling, and oh, I could go on and on . . . It has also inherited the playability of *RR*, and therefore has a lot of potential at this price level. This is the type of game that could keep you going for a long time. In itself, *Survivors* isn't a bad game, but the graphics and the 'return to the start' bit knocks it down a bit."

MIKE



COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, O left, P right, 1, 2, or 3 to access droids, 4 and 5 to quit current game, ENTER to pause game
Joystick: n/a
Use of colour: plentiful
Graphics: undetailed with jerky movement
Sound: spot effects
Skill levels: seven
Screens: large scrolling play area
General rating: A good variation on the *Boulderdash* theme with puzzle overtones

Presentation	65%
Graphics	59%
Playability	72%
Addictive qualities	69%
Value for money	75%
Overall	70%


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HYPERBOWL

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Binary Design**

This is **BINARY DESIGN**'s second futuristic ice hockey game: *Xeno* was the first, and now *Hyperbowl* makes its appearance

The action takes place in an area of space viewed from above. Two players attempt to propel a large puck toward their opponent's goal line by colliding with it or shooting it. A point is scored if the puck passes over the line at the end of the pitch and two points earned if the puck enters the central goal.

The game lasts for five minutes, or until a player earns nine points. When a player scores, play returns to the centre of the field with the scorer facing away from the puck

At the start of the game players select a ship from the ten available. Some move faster or accelerate quicker. Some fire homing shots, while others fire in a straight line.

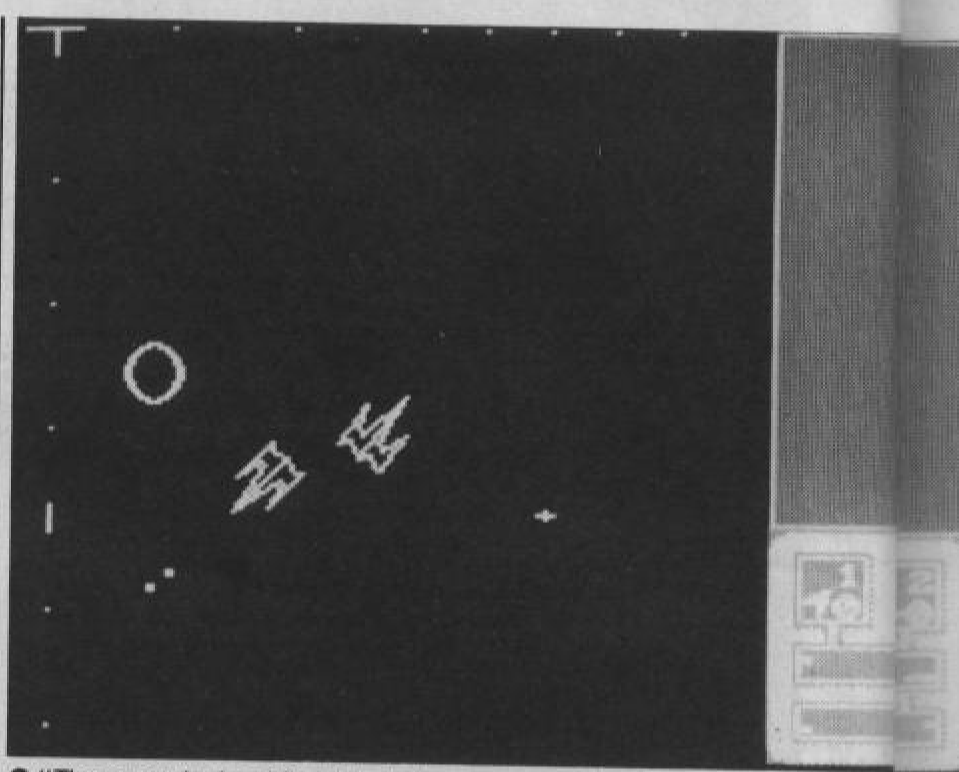
The screen shows a segment of the pitch and includes a scanner which reveals the whereabouts of the ships in relation to the puck. This information is vital in the two player game – if your ship goes flying out of the game window, the only way to get it back is to use the scanner displays – the window is always centered on the puck.

Playing against the computer, there are three skill levels. If you win a game, you go onto the next round and face a tougher opponent. Win five games on the trot and you're the champ!

CRITICISM

● **"I'm not too pleased with** Hyperbowl **– it's another game which gives me the impression that it was rushed at the programming stage. The idea** Hyperbowl **is very good although a bit more variation wouldn't go amiss. The front end is excellent but things start to get a bit tatty during the game. Controlling your ship is relatively easy, but blasting the ball about the place is tricky as it seems to move randomly no matter how precise your aim is. The graphics could have been improved greatly: with only three objects they could at least look right . . . Given the price, this isn't a bad game but I couldn't play it for long."**

BEN



● *"The screen looks a bit plain but the scenario is good and the game is very playable. The presentation is excellent. Unfortunately the sound is poor. The game lacks tunes and is accompanied by a few 'futt futt' noises. The rules are very simple, and the pitch layout is not very complex. But this is what makes the game so addictive and exciting to play. The two player option is excellent if you can find an opponent of equal ability.* Hyperbowl *is a perfect budget game and well worth the asking price."*

PAUL

● "**MASTERTRONIC** have done a fair job with this one. The chance to select ships is very neat, and the whole game is very well executed: neat presentation with a good loading screen, nice packaging,

GUNSTAR

Producer: Firebird
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Software Creations**

Mother Earth has been invaded. A strange breed of sophisticated beings from a distant planet overwhelmed the World's primitive Star Wars defence system and enslaved the human race. The aliens seem to have settled in for a long visit and life looks bleak and futile for mankind. The only hope for humanity lies in one final plan.

Hidden away inside a nearby moon a research team has been concentrating on creating a totally new type of fighter craft. Just in the nick of time their experiments come to fruition in the form of the Pulse Fighters. With an expert team of pilots know as the Gunstar Fleet manning these small but powerful craft, the enslaved population can stage an attempt to reclaim Earth. Time for you to step in . . .

There are five levels to the game. The mission begins with direct combat as you meet waves of aliens on the vertically scrolling playscreen. After the alien fighters have been dealt with, fly through an asteroid belt, dodging the rocks until the alien command ship is encountered. To destroy the command ship, its gun emplacements have to be knocked out and then it's on to do battle with an alien robot that is defended with . . . gun emplacements. Finally, the mission comes to an end when you dock with the Earth Mothership and refuel the fighter ready to take on another wave of alien pilots and their fighters.

Three Pulse Fighter pilots are in the Gunstar Fleet and at the start of a mission the name of the Space Ace you control flashes on the screen, together with a few personal details including his experience, hobbies and the sort of Pulse Fighter he's flying. When a pilot dies you move on to the next Fleet member.

The score amassed by dealing death to aliens is displayed at the top right hand corner of the screen in the status panel along with your fuel status and engine temperature. An icon is highlighted to indicate which pilot is currently in the cockpit.

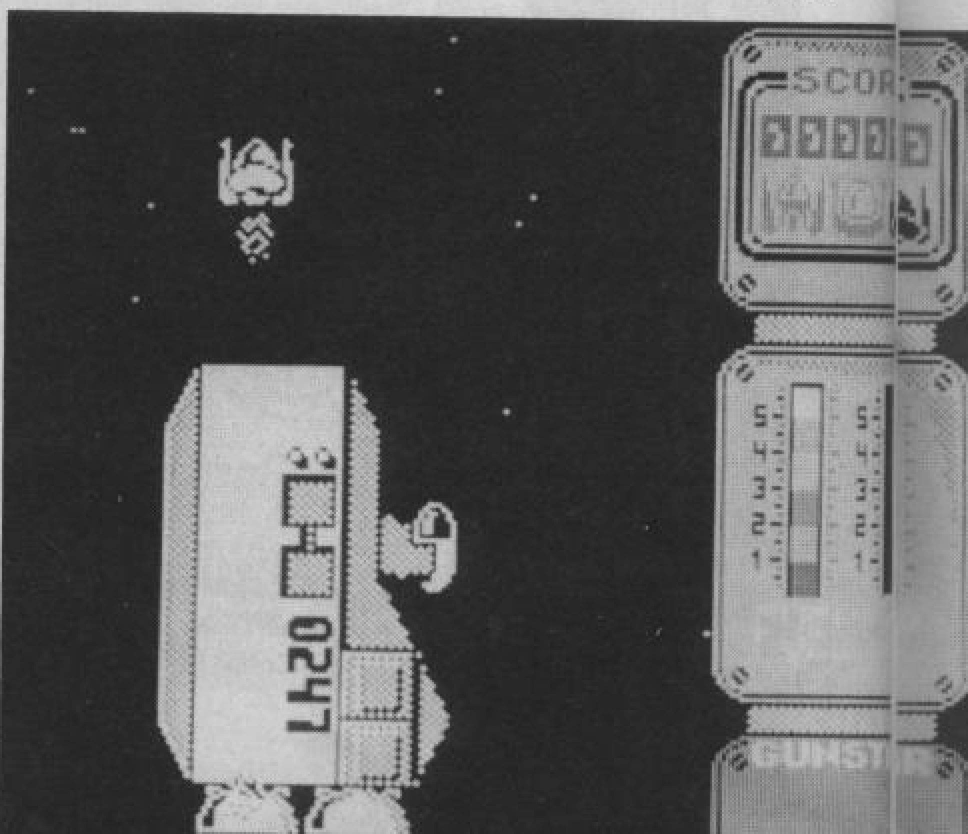
CRITICISM

● **" Well this makes a change, I haven't seen a nice budget shoot 'em up for months. It really is good fun gratuitously blasting enemy fighters and dodging waves of meteors, but as it isn't difficult to become competent at it doesn't take too long to complete and then it gets very very boring. Graphically** Gunstar **is pretty: the characters move about smoothly at speed and there are a lot of nice touches both during the game and on the title screen. Although there are no tunes, the sound effects are fairly good. This will probably keep you quiet for for a couple of days and I'd say that it is well worth two quid. "**

BEN

● *" Mmmm strange little game, this one. For £1.99* **FIREBIRD** *seem to have come up with the almost typical little budget game.* Gunstar *comes with great presentation, with lots of nice little spot effects and featuring good use of colour. The actual content is very minimal, but I still find it very addictive and fun to play. Maybe it is a bit like* Moon Cresta, *but what there is of the game is very well designed and simply structured. If you want a fun game for £1.99 then you can't go far wrong with* Gunstar. *Simple but effective. "*

PAUL



and a highly attractive if sluggish title screen – in fact everything you don't usually see in a cheap game. For £1.99, you get stacks of gameplay, and lots of addictive qualities; it might become boring in the distant future, but it has a lot more potential than many games five times its price."

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: Player One: Q Accelerate, A Stop, S Rotate Left, D Rotate Right, X Fire. Player Two: I Accelerate, K Stop, L Rotate Left, ENTER Rotate Right, SYMBOL Fire.
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: monochrome action area
Graphics: a little basic perhaps
Sound: minimal
Skill levels: three
Screens: 32
General rating: A very reasonable budget offering

Presentation	80%
Graphics	60%
Playability	77%
Addictive qualities	73%
Value for money	82%
Overall	76%

● " What a pleasant surprise: a really playable game. The humour is good enough to keep you playing for a while and then the game itself ought to keep you going. It reeks of budget labels but for £1.99 it does represent very good value for money. The high score table looks very DESIGN DESIGNesque although it lacks the original, amusing responses of *Dark Star*. The pilot details, although good, tend to be frustrating after half an hour or so and the pauses get a little aggravating. However it's very definitely the sort of game you just keep playing again and again. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable – up, down, left, right, fire
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: effective
Graphics: some detail, quite fast
Sound: the occasional spot effect
Skill levels: five
Screens: scrolling play area
General rating: A neat but undemanding budget shoot 'em up

Presentation	74%
Graphics	58%
Playability	69%
Addictive qualities	63%
Value for money	70%
Overall	62%

SAS: OPERATION THUNDERFLASH

Producer: Creative Sparks
Retail Price: **£2.99**
Author: **Mark Rivers**

Here's a game that gives you the chance to be an SAS hero – if you think you can handle it! You take the role of Rock Hardman, leader of a crack SAS squad, who's been chosen for a tough mission – in fact it's his toughest yet. A foreign embassy has been taken over by terrorists and hostages are being held. Single-handedly he must set this situation right.

You move diagonally across the screen, rotating quickly if a terrorist attempts to attack from behind. The embassy consists of a number of rooms, all of which house a deadly terrorist. You make your way through these rooms one by one, killing the terrorists as you go. Your enemies are aware of your position and make every attempt to see you off before you reach them, therefore it is important to eliminate them with your first shot whenever possible. You are endowed with four lives, one of which is lost each time a terrorist bullet hits home.

The embassy is a three-storey building, with movement between the floors achieved by lifts. The hostages are randomly scattered about the entire embassy, and you must search them out and deliver them to safety while eliminating the terrorists.

There is a time factor to be taken into consideration, represented by a system of diminishing points. You start with a total of 100 points, one of which is lost with every movement made. This total can be replenished by releasing hostages and killing terrorists, and you must have enough points left to escape when your mission is completed.

CRITICISM

● **" Wow! a good piece of budget software – I'm surprised – I'm shocked – I like it.** Operation Thunderflash **is one of those games that you can either play or you can't. The terrorists really are nasty so you've got to be quite quick on the draw. Graphically, this is the first poor filmation-style program that I've seen – the characters flicker a lot and they aren't really detailed enough. It would also have been nice if there was more than one type of terrorist. The sound is a bit on the drab side, with very few effects and no tunes. All in all, I still think this offers excellent value for money, and I recommend it. "**

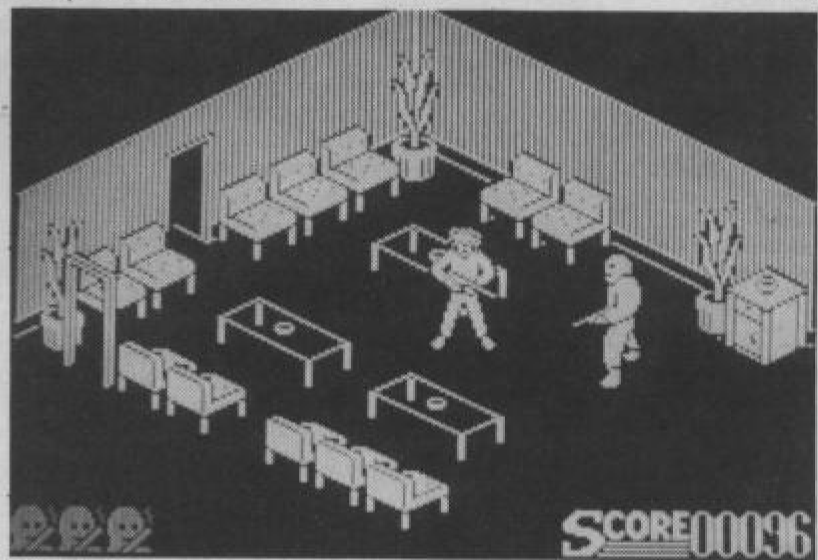
BEN

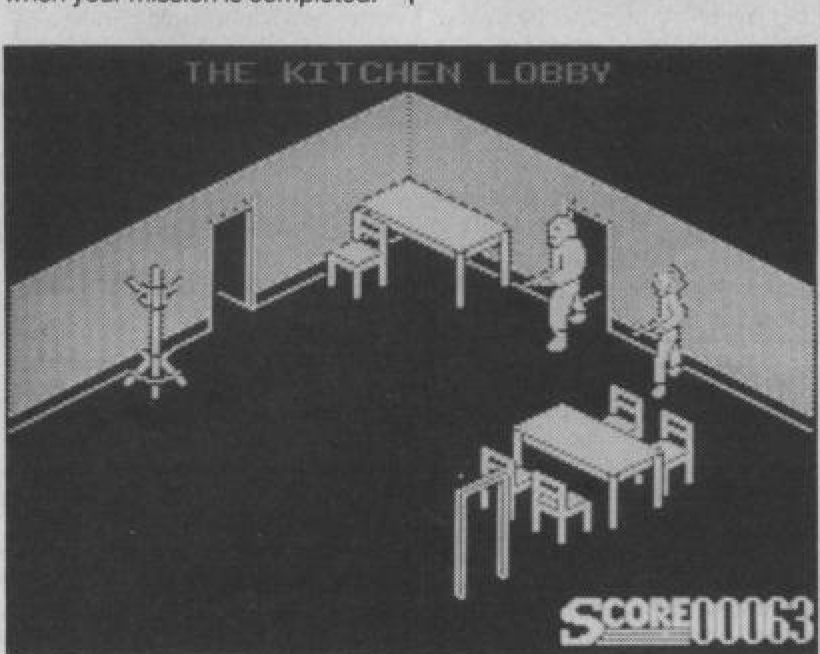
● *" Visually this game seems very attractive on the surface – but in reality it contains little more. A closer look at the characters reveals that they are out of proportion with the scenery, and somehow look stretched. The animation of the people is kept to the simplest form, and thus looks very jerky. I found it very hard to get started, until I discovered that it was just a case of 'spin and shoot', with the enemies posing no real problem. The keyboard play is very erratic and extremely hard to get used to. Nowadays, if a 3D monochrome, arcade adventure wants to make an impression it has to be something very special – even at £2.99.* Operation Thunderflash *holds little lasting appeal. Not recommended. "*

PAUL

● " The characters in this game are pretty poorly drawn and animated; the main dude looks as if he's two pixels thick – and if you're really lucky, you can see the other men through him! Variety is sadly lacking, as a lot of the screens look very familiar, and most of the terrorists are identical in appearance. Shooting the opposition isn't easy, as they shoot as soon as, if not before, you come into line with them. If you do get near them the chances are that one of you won't be going away! As far as value goes, *Operation Thunderflash* hasn't got much wrong with it. There are a lot of men to be shot, and, despite the fact that it looks very like a cheapie, it might be worth checking out. "

MIKE





COMMENTS

Control keys: S up, C down, B back, J forward or Z anticlockwise, X clockwise, M walk, K fire rotate left, X rotate right, M walk
Joystick: Kempston
Use of colour: monochromatic
Graphics: a little flickery, unremarkable
Sound: spot effects throughout
Skill levels: one
Screens: fifty
General rating: A fairly respectable piece of budget software

Presentation	62%
Graphics	59%
Playability	65%
Addictive qualities	64%
Value for money	63%
Overall	63%

BMX SIMULATOR

Producer: Code Masters
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Tim Miller**

All the excitement of hurtling round on a BMX bike is brought into your living room by this latest offering from CODE MASTERS, the new budget specialists. This is a conversion of the Commodore game written by one of the company's founders, Richard Darling.

A maze of oil cans, tyres and planks is viewed from above as two bikes hurtle around its tortuous twists and turns. Each race consists of three laps of the course, which must be completed within a time limit. There are three controls, left, right and pedal. There are seven different courses in total, though you may choose to only play over some of them.

Hitting obstacles sends the hapless cyclist hurtling over the handlebars. The poor chap then wastes precious time mounting up and pedalling off. If the two bikes collide, then the slower rider is thrown off.

The contest takes place against the computer or another player. In two-player mode if both players get round within the qualifying time, they progress together to the next race. If only one rider makes it, he takes on a computer opponent for the remaining rounds. Some corners are banked, and the riders can use these to help get round the bends. Turning becomes more difficult as speed increases.

Score depends on the time remaining at the end of a race. This accumulates from round to round to give the final score. If there is a closely contested finish, a replay option can be selected and the race seen again in all its glory – even running the really exciting bits in slow motion!

CRITICISM

● **"Sorry, but I don't really see the point in this. It's a boring game about a sport that went underground years ago. The only pleasure that I derived from this was watching the players fall off their bikes - they fly and bounce quite well. Other than this** BMX Simulator **was a bit of a dead loss for me. There is a large amount of luck involved, and I never really felt like I was in control. There are plenty of good budget games around at the moment: I'd fork out for one of those and stay away from this if I was you."**

BEN

● *"MASTERTRONIC continue on their road to success.* BMX Simulator *is a very polished bit of software, with many options and superb presentation. Even though the graphics are mainly two-colour, they give an excellent impression of 3D. The title tune contains some good noises, but they lack any co-ordination. Keyboard controls are kept very simple and very responsive. This is great fun to play, and perfectly priced at £1.99."*

PAUL

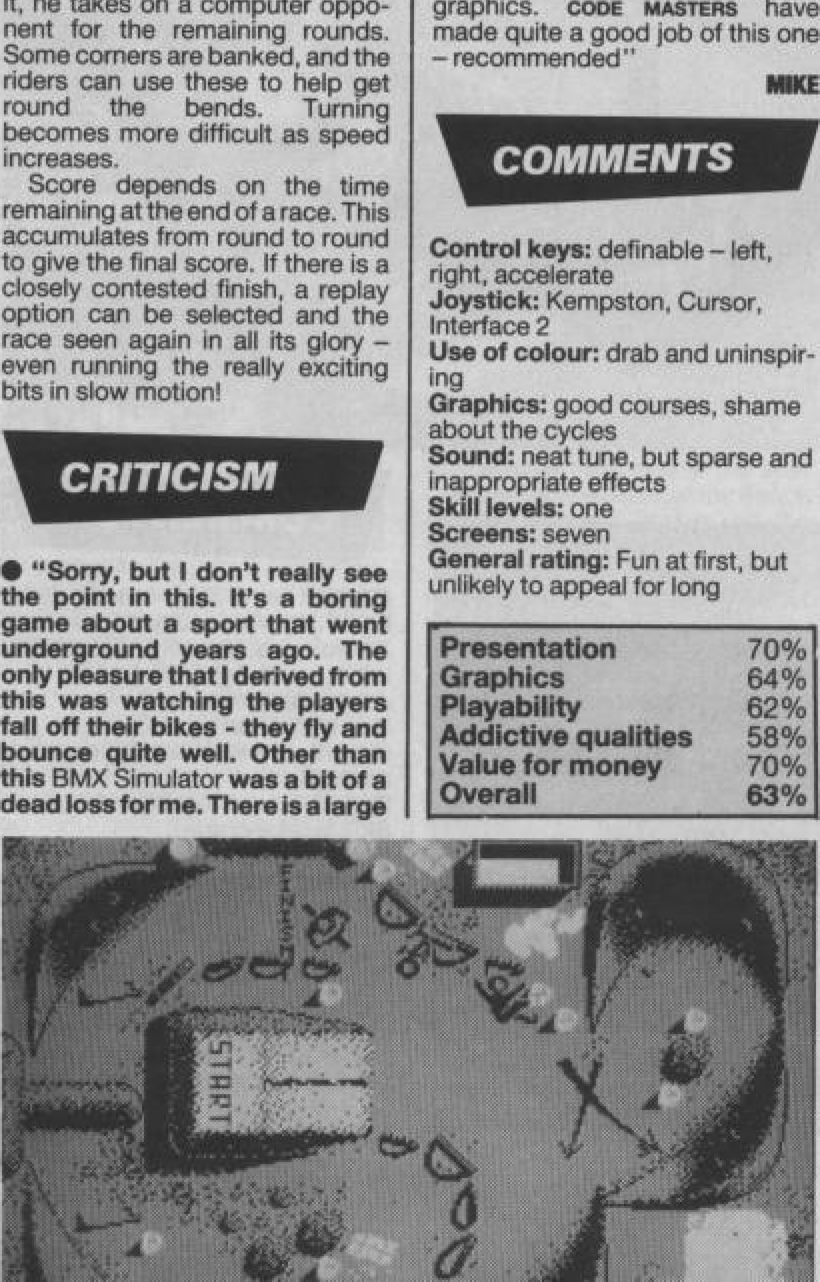
● "The screen shots on the back of the package aren't particularly inspiring, and the tune on the title screen has neat beats and things, but in completely the wrong places! Nevertheless, urged on by the cries of fellow reviewers I went on, and WOW! – I was stunned. The idea is very simple, but the game is really quite playable. The screen shots on the inlay don't do any justice to the detail of the graphics. CODE MASTERS have made quite a good job of this one – recommended"

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable – left, right, accelerate
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Use of colour: drab and uninspiring
Graphics: good courses, shame about the cycles
Sound: neat tune, but sparse and inappropriate effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: seven
General rating: Fun at first, but unlikely to appeal for long

Presentation	70%
Graphics	64%
Playability	62%
Addictive qualities	58%
Value for money	70%
Overall	**63%**

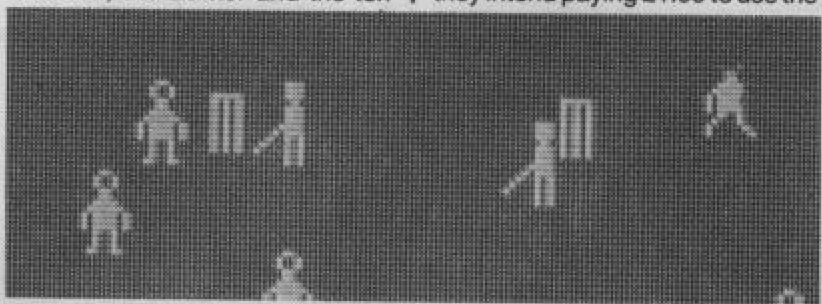


HOWZAT

Producer: Alternative Software
Retail Price: **£1.99**
Author: **Wyvern Software**

Howzat! is a two player cricket simulation with plenty of options, presented on a series of menus. The first decision to make is whether to play one-day or first class cricket. There are sixteen county sides and seven test sides to choose between, depending on the level of cricket chosen, and if none of them meet with your approval names of your own choice may be input. Opting for an existing team calls up a squad of eleven players automatically. Some fine tuning is possible and when a team has been finalised, its members are given a batting and bowling rating from one to ten.

After the teams have been accepted, the computer randomly selects the winner of the toss. The batting side has to choose the opening batsmen and conversely, the fielding side needs to choose the bowler. The screen then changes to show a birds-eye-view of the cricket pitch, the two batsmen, the bowler and the ten fielders. Fielders may be repositioned at any stage of the match.



At the end of an over the score card appears and the batting card, the bowler's analysis and the innings report may be accessed. Choose another bowler and the match continues.

The computer automatically tells you if the batsman has scored four or six runs, if the ball goes to the wicket keeper or if it's a wide. If the ball can be seen on the pitch after it is struck then it's down to you on how many runs you wish to attempt.

CRITICISM

● " Howzat **is truly a screamer. I wouldn't wish this on anyone. In my few years of games reviewing I haven't seen a sports simulator that has been as boring to play as this. Some may argue that** Howzat **captures the strategy element of cricket, but it doesn't: selecting where on the field your fielders stand or whether to run or not isn't really all there is to the great sport. The graphics are dire: UDG characters are used so there is a multitude of little stickmen on the pitch. There is no sound but in a game of this quality I wouldn't expect any. Stay well away from it. "**

BEN

● *"ALTERNATIVE SOFTWARE, mmm! Well it's certainly a bit different. The game features a few realistic points like the grass being green. I was very disappointed at the amount of inaccuracies and bugs in the game. Fancy being able to play an England team against itself! At one stage Tavare was bowling against himself. Or even Botham catching himself out. The bowler doesn't even get to the crease to bowl. At least the scoreboard is pretty good – but you're not playing the scoreboard, are you? Another cricket game bites the stumps. "*

PAUL

● "*Howzat* is a very, very boring game. More interest could have been added with the inclusion of a watch-the-grass-growing mode. I'm quite sure that no-one is going to find this value for money, unless they intend paying £1.99 to use the inlay for something unmentionable. The screen display is sufficiently garish to light a room, and the stick men graphics aren't even animated. ALTERNATIVE SOFTWARE deserve large congratulations for producing potentially the biggest failure ever. "

MIKE

COMMENTS

Control keys: cursor keys to move cursor and individual keys to make selections
Joystick: n/a
Use of colour: white players on green field
Graphics: very basic
Sound: nothing much
Skill levels: one
Screens: menus plus the pitch
General rating: Not much in the way of gameplay - for masochistic cricket freaks only

Presentation	34%
Graphics	9%
Playability	13%
Addictive qualities	7%
Value for money	15%
Overall	**11%**

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HACKER II

Producer: Activision
Retail Price: **£9.95**
Author: **Steve Cartwright**

It's fourteen months since *Hacker* first graced the Spectrum screen. Heralded at the time as a demanding and highly original game, it now has a follow-up in the form of *Hacker II*. Once again it's been designed and written by Steve Cartwright, but this time on a much grander scale.

Your reputation as a computer boffin has prompted the United States government to seek your help on a top secret mission. The CIA have discovered a plot by the Soviets which could upset the balance of power between the East and the West forever. The details of their plan are contained in what have become known as the 'Doomsday Papers'. These are held inside a high security Siberian base. It is your task, with the help of three Mobile Remote Units (MRUs – similar to those used in *Hacker*), to explore the base and steal the plans before the Russians can use them.

The complex security system which the Soviets have installed must be hoodwinked. For this purpose you control a device which can monitor their four thirty-eight channel security cameras. Video-taping facilities are available so that recordings can be made and substituted for the original security film. Using this method it is possible to create extra time to manoeuvre, without being spotted by the security guards. Other features on this device include frame pause, and a vital preview function for editing purposes.

It's also possible to use one of the four monitor screens to display the area immediately around the MRU. Using this display it is possible to map the complex, which aids exploration. The display reveals the whereabouts of security officers and active monitors in the area.

The screen controls are situated on a panel at the bottom of the display. They are activated by moving an arrow over the desired option (using joystick or keyboard), then pressing fire or the M key. The selected option is then highlighted. The animated graphics are grey on black (with touches of red and blue), and give the impression of monochrome monitors.

One particularly nasty Russian weapon is the annihilator. A kind of anti-robot robot, it hunts down and kills MRUs. This must be avoided, as your limited supply of MRUs is all that stands between the free world and disaster.

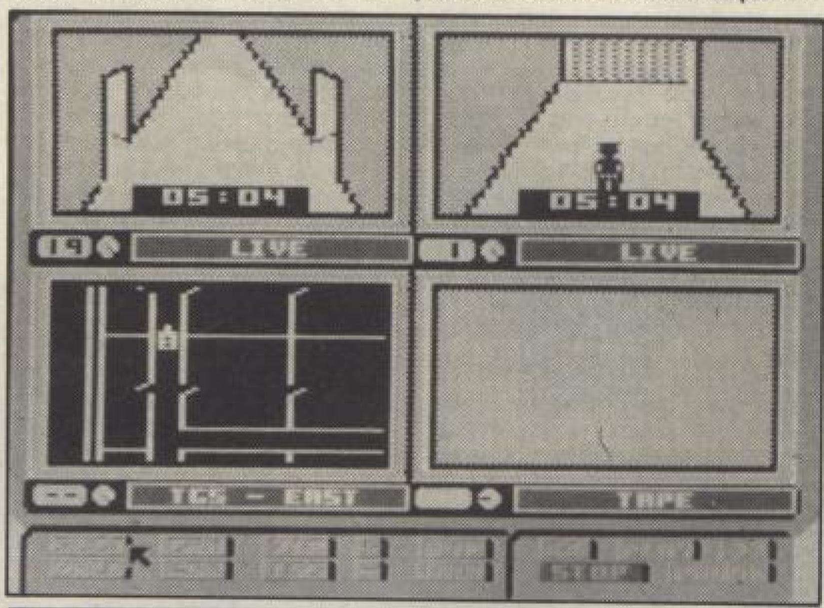
CRITICISM

● **"Agggggh – they said that I'd be safe from games like this. Well it looks as though this has got through the guards (it sneaked through by hiding behind its arcade sequences). Joking aside, this is definitely a better game than its predecessor as it contains more 'in-depth' plot. Unfortunately the game is not at all easy to get into so it didn't really appeal to me. The graphics and sound are not at all bad: the screen is well laid out and there are some nice effects. However, I'd only recommend it if you were a** Hacker **fan."**

BEN

● *"I really loved* Hacker, *so I was really looking forward to the sequel, and what an excellent job* ACTIVISION *have done with it. The video machine is something you have to see – the amount of detail that has gone into it is amazing – but it's a pity they used the VHS model as the vertical hold often needs adjusting! Everything has to be very cleverly worked out, such as putting the video on the monitors to fool the security guards. It's obvious that lots of thought has gone into* Hacker II *and it was worth it, it's a thoroughly enjoyable and addictive game."*

PAUL

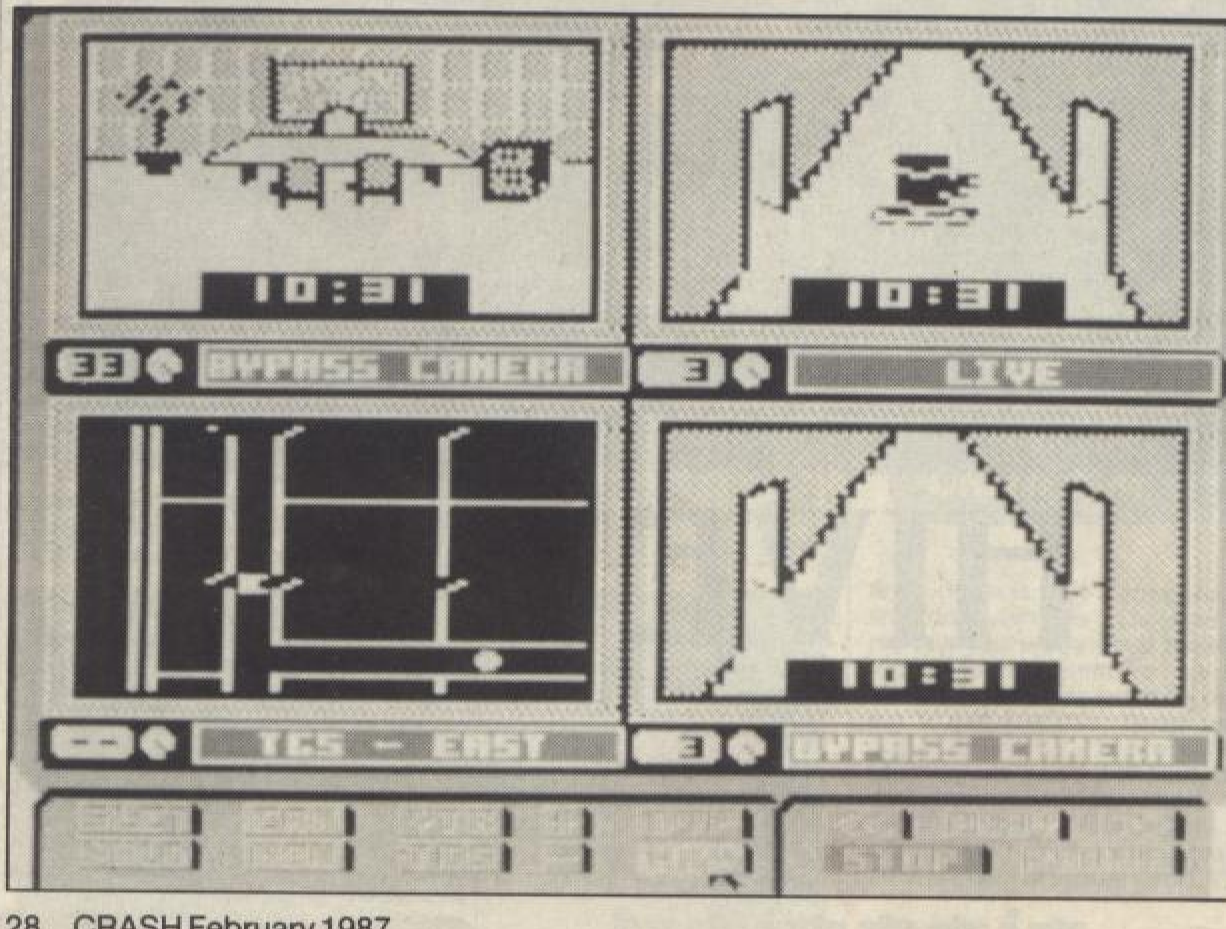


Camera Two shows the MRU strolling down one of the corridors in the complex

● "Despite the excellent polished exterior, I found *Hacker II* to be a little lacking in the gameplay stakes. The graphics are very good, and it's lots of fun getting used to (and playing with) the video recorder. It's a vast improvement on its predecessor, but something's still not quite right. The content isn't actually lacking as there is plenty to do, but after a while spent playing it I found I got a bit bored. Colour has been used excellently, and generally I find it hard to criticise any one thing in the program, but it does lack some vital element that could have made it into a smash hit."

MIKE

Things are getting hectic: the fearsome Annihilator walks past Camera Two – time to make a strategic withdrawal?



COMMENTS

Control keys: Q up, A down, O left, P right, M push button
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Use of colour: basic but effective
Graphics: simple effective graphics which add to the atmosphere
Sound: atmospheric spot effects that give a creepy and realistic effect
Skill levels: one
Screens: one
General rating: a worthy sequel

Presentation	93%
Graphics	82%
Playability	81%
Addictive qualities	79%
Value for money	80%
Overall	82%

PREVIEW

Coming soon to a Spectrum near you!



The good Magic Knight finds himself up against a large and menacing Bearwoolf

MAGIC KNIGHT RIDES AGAIN!

The saga of Magic Knight, the cute little time-travelling hero created by **David Jones** for *Spellbound*, is not yet over. Magic Knight's first adventure involved rescuing his pal Gymbal the Wizard from a time warp. The time warp took its revenge, and dumped Magic Knight onboard the starship USS Pisces in the 25th century. In *Knight Tyme*, Magic Knight had to persuade the starship crew to take him to a planet with a convenient time machine before he could get back to his own time.

On the way home our hero got tangled with a parallel universe and caused another Magic Knight (the Off White Knight) to arrive in Magic Knight's home town. The Off White fellow isn't a goody-goody by any means – he decides to set about subjugating (LMLWD) the masses and generally being foul and obnoxious. Naturally, our hero, righter of wrongs, doer of great deeds, and general all-round good guy, feels obliged to sort out the mess he's caused.

The action in *Stormbringer* takes place in four areas: The Forest, The Caves, the Castle and Off White Knight's time machine. As in the previous *Magic Knight* games, our hero can manipulate the objects which he finds lying around – the windowmation system allows the player to interact with the central character.

MASTERTRONIC intend to release both 48K and 128K versions of the game. The 128K version will feature an impressive 64 rooms, 64 objects and 16 characters as well as background music, and at the moment David Jones is trying to cram as much as he can into the 48K program.

STEVE TURNER TUNES UP . . .

Steve Turner is currently working on another game for **HEWSON**'s which is scheduled for release in March. *Ranarama* is an eight-level shoot em up, played over a scrolling landscape populated by regenerating nasties.

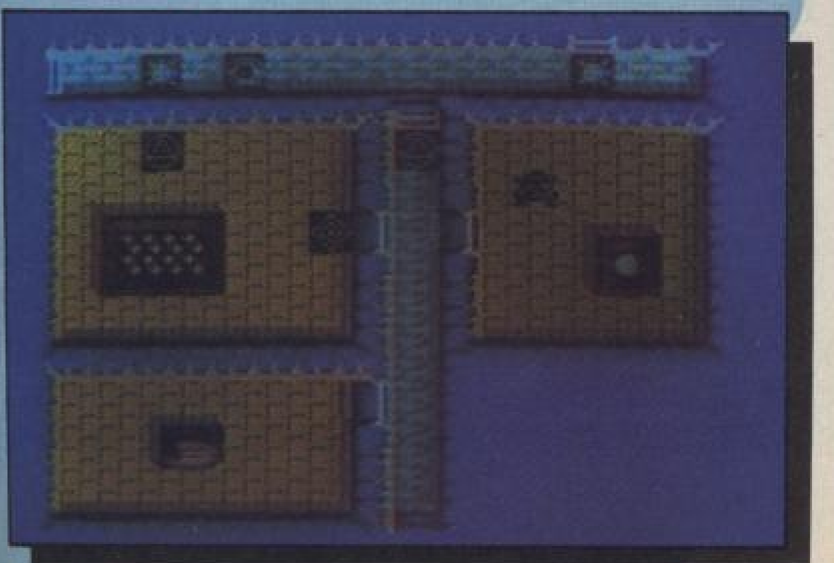
A sorcerer's apprentice by the name of Mervyn was attempting to cast a spell to make himself tall, muscular and attractive when a horde of evil wizards staged an invasion. The bad wizards have killed off everyone else in the land – and only missed Mervyn because his amateur magic turned him into a frog rather than a butch hero.

The spell didn't go completely wrong however. Frog though he may be, Mervyn has become incredibly brave as a result of his misapplication of magic, and he decides to take on the invading magicians. A level consists of between 50 and 100 rooms viewed from above – and they start off plunged into darkness. When Mervyn enters a room for the first time it is flooded with light, and remains illuminated. for the rest of the game.

Missiles, power and shields may be collected and their effect is graded according to the level they belong to – it's no good hurling missiles from Level One at the wizards' minions on Level Two as it only makes them cross! Spells are available at randomly chosen locations, and the wizards carry runes which may be converted into the resources used in the conflict. Wizards only yield their runes to Mervyn when he has defeated them. A dozen wizards roam each level, and Mervyn needs to kill them all in one-to-one combat before he can move on.

Steve Turner is still taking inspiration from the C64 game *Paradroid*, programmed by his partner, Andrew Braybrook – when it's complete, *Ranarama* will take the hero into a sub-game whenever it's time to fight a wizard. At the moment it's those sub-games that Steve's concentrating on . . .

Froggy hero Mervyn contemplates his lot. Maybe he'll find a beautiful princess at the end of the eighth level of RANARAMA?



JUDGE DREDD

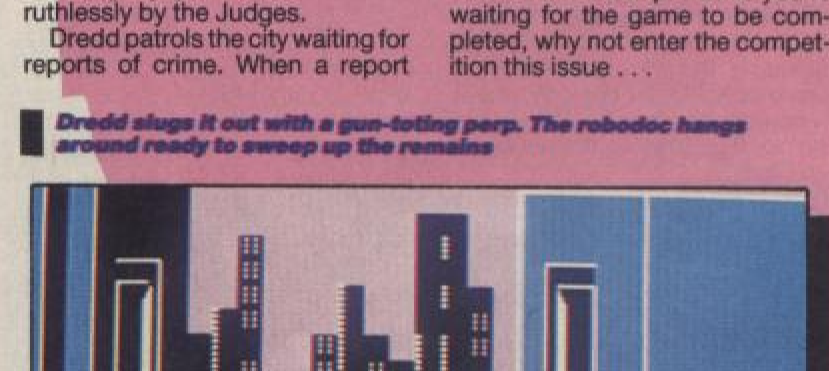
Another tie-in involving characters from the comic 2000AD is on its way – this time it's **MELBOURNE HOUSE**'s turn, and they are busy putting the finishing touches to *Judge Dredd*.

The Judge is the toughest upholder of law and order in Mega-City 1, the giant, sprawling metropolis that has grown out from New York and occupies the entire east coast of America. In the huge city crime is rife, and the perpetrators (perps) are hunted down ruthlessly by the Judges.

Dredd patrols the city waiting for reports of crime. When a report comes through, he's got to make his way to the scene of the crime and deal with the perp. Depending on the severity of the crime, the judge shoots on sight, fires a warning shot or tries to take the perp off to the 'tubes' nice and peacefully. A spot of littering is not a capital offence, even in Mega-City 1, but Tap (mugging), Murder, or Stookie Glanding must be cracked down on hard.

Should go down well with fans of the cartoon strip – while you're waiting for the game to be completed, why not enter the competition this issue . . .

Dredd slugs it out with a gun-toting perp. The robodoc hangs around ready to sweep up the remains

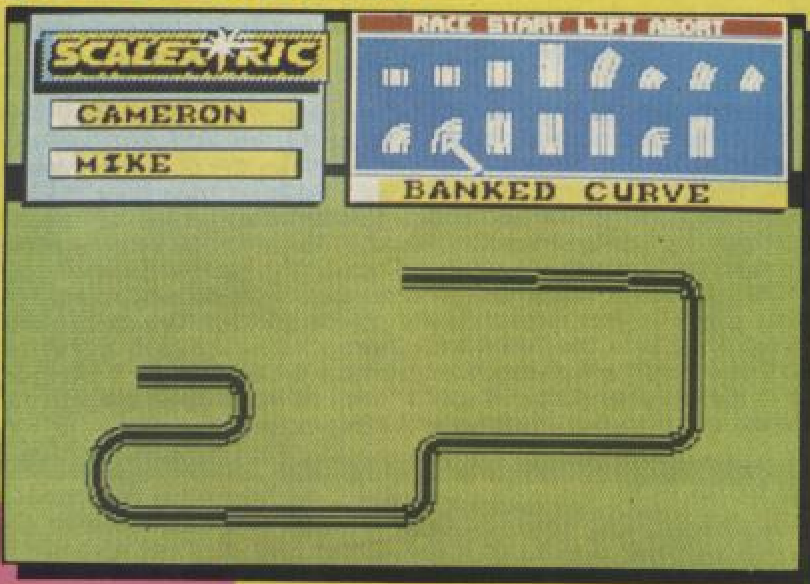


SCALEXTRIC

What's the next best thing to being a real-life Formula One racing driver? Scalextric of course! Who can resist the joys of messing about with bits of a track which resolutely refuse to come together – then there are the cars which keep stopping because the contacts are dead, and the transformer which keeps blowing up: in fact all manner of problems to keep the serious enthusiast occupied for hours.

Now for all you armchair Nigel Mansells, LEISURE GENIUS bring you the thrills of the real(ish) thing in computer form. The program is divided into two sections. The first allows you to pick from one of the famous circuits included – if none of these appeal to you, the track designing facility comes in handy.

The circuit designing section of SCALEXTRIC. Speedy Came ron picks a banked curve for his next track



Tracks are constructed by selecting a number of curves and straights, and stringing them together to make a circuit of the required difficulty.

When a track has been selected it's time to get on with the race. Two cars compete, racing along a horizontally-split screen. In one-player mode the computer takes control of one of the cars, and can be given one of three levels of ability. Tailoring your vehicle's speed to suit the corners is the key to success, as taking a corner too quickly results in your car leaving the track.

Oh my word, Cameron is just behind his new assistant Mike in this tense battle for the lead



Speed merchants should be able to rev up and go any day now – an investment of £9.95 with LEISURE GENIUS should keep the front room carpet free of clutter!

KONAMI GO IT ALONE

KONAMI, the kings of the coin-op arcades, have decided to produce their own conversions for home micros, and first off the production line for the Spectrum should be *Jail Break*, priced at £7.95.

It's an emergency. The prisoners are on the rampage and have taken a number of hostages, including the Prison Warden. A brave upholder of law and order, Policeman Plod, sets out to shoot the convicts, rescue the hostages and defend innocent citizens. Not exactly an enlightened attitude towards prison reform and the rehabilitation of offenders, but without this shoot 'em quick attitude there wouldn't be much left of the town . . .

PC Plod starts off armed with a pistol – not the ideal equipment for approaching a bunch of heavily-armed desperadoes. Under your guidance, he can pick up extra weapons and win bonus points as he rescues hostages from the evil clutches of the trigger-happy convicts.

JAILBREAK





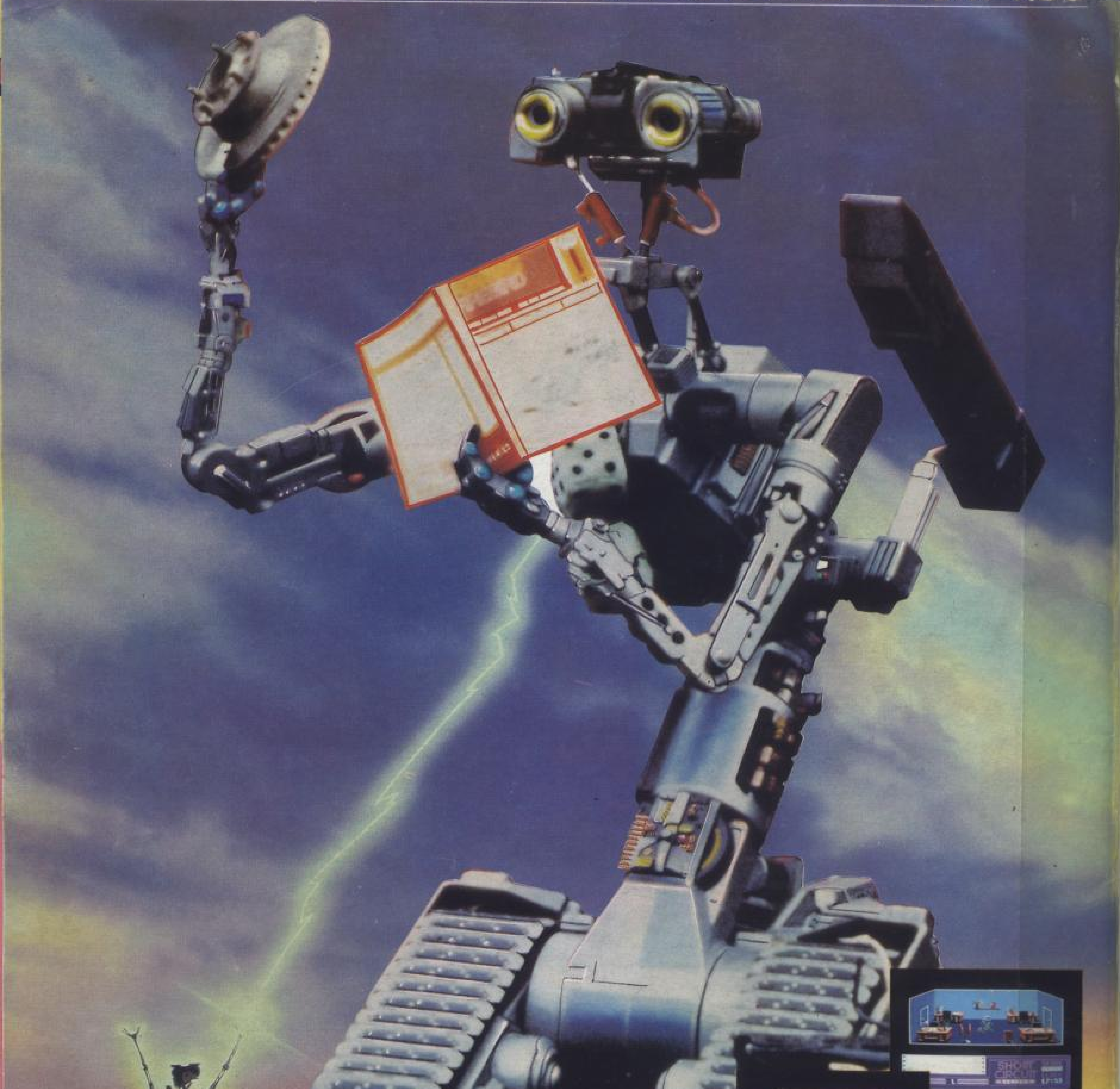
The heavily-armed spaceship blasts alien ground installa tions in NEMESIS

Bumping off hostages by indiscriminate use of newly-acquired weapons, such as the Rocket Gun or Tear Gas Bomb, leads to the new toys being taken away again, so care is needed. The Rocket gun is especially useful for dealing with barriers and cars, while the Tear Gas comes into its own when prisoners get holed up in the buildings.

The latest news on a release date for *Jail Break* is that it should be in the shops by January 15th. KONAMI plan to follow this up with other conversions including *Nemesis*, *Super Basketball* and *Iron Horse*. The first of these, *Nemesis*, should hit the streets by the beginning of February – but for those of you who can't wait that long, here to whet your appetite is a screen shot . . .


STRIKE
Experience the exhiliration of big league bowling with outstanding graphics and a true perspective action view.
Multiple levels of play, realistic pin action and automatic scoring make 10th Frame a bowling reality the whole family can enjoy. You may even be tempted to invest in high time bowler shoes and shirt once you've become obsessed with this addictive game.
Another smash hit from the creators of that simulation sensation "Leaderboard".
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SHORT CIRCUIT™

It was a one-in-a-million accident – but Number Five, designed to be a strategic artificially intelligent weapons system, the most sophisticated robot on the planet, has escaped – and has come to the conclusion that he's alive! Now the scientist who put him together wants to take him apart again to find out what went wrong. The president of Nova Robotics wants to capture him before the weapons he's carrying kill millions of civilians. And the security chief wants to blow him up so that he can get home in time for dinner. YOU are Number Five...YOU are alive and YOU have got to stay that way!

ocean

Ocean Software Limited
Ocean House · 6 Central Street · Manchester · M2 5NS
Telephone 061 832 6633 · Telex 669977 Oceans G